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MODERN SERMONS BY WORLD SCHOLARS

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Modern Sermons by World Scholars

VOLUME I

ABBOTT TO BOSWORTH

MODERN SERMONS
BY
WORLD SCHOLARS

EDITED BY
ROBERT SCOTT AND WILLIAM C. STILES
Editors of *The Homiletic Review*

INTRODUCTION BY
NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS
Pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn

Hurst Memorial Library
Pacific Christian College
Long Beach, Calif.

IN TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME I—ABBOTT TO BOSWORTH

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PREFACE

THE aim in preparing this work has been to provide in sermonic form a diversified, representative and scholarly presentation of the everlasting truths of the gospel; to make the volumes a veritable college in the science of homiletics, so far as such a work can meet this function.

The chief difference between this work and all other volumes of sermons now in use, whether issued in one or more volumes, is that this is the only sermonic work ever constructed along international, representative and scholarly lines and put into such compact and convenient form.

The one hundred and seventeen sermons in these volumes are all by living men, representing different parts of the world, as well as representing many different denominations. Most of them have been in the active ministry, but are now identified with seminaries, colleges, and universities, or hold official positions

connected with their respective denominations, or have editorial connections.

These contributors, moreover, are scholars who stand among the foremost living writers in the field of religious and theological thought. Their contributions to the encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries of our time, their text-books and their numerous contributions to the best magazines, is, we think, sufficient guarantee that the sermons will, on the whole, stand the test of the most critical examination.

What the reader would naturally expect from such sources we believe he will find in these sermons. Practically they traverse the whole field of sermonic literature, presenting unusual variety and richness of style, combined with depth and range of thought, and replete with a rich fund of information and inspiration. Because of the wide ground which they cover, we are confident that they will become nothing less than models for the modern preacher and for those who are preparing for the ministry. Professor Harnack says, "It is very much easier to produce six brilliant scientific treatises than to deliver or write one sermon which is timeless." This

timeless element belongs to these sermons and gives them their peculiar worth.

We desire to express our hearty appreciation of the uniform courtesy and kindness of the many contributors to this work, without whose generous cooperation in preparing their manuscripts and examining the proofs we could not have produced it.

We also desire to acknowledge our indebtedness to many correspondents who have been good enough to call our attention to names of scholars worthy of a place in these volumes.

In accordance with more modern methods of printing and editing, the sermons in this collection have been, for the most part, relieved of numeral division marks, italics and similar mechanical devices. By this method we have secured approximate uniformity in the mechanical part of the work.

INTRODUCTION

DURING that dark epoch before the English Revolution an English statesman asked Lord Bacon for a forecast of events for England. To which the philosopher replied, "Tell me what the young men in our universities are thinking, and I will tell you how events will go for the next century." After reading these fascinating pages by our most distinguished educators, authors and editors, we laid down the volumes with the reflection that we know what the young men in our colleges of to-day, who are to be the leaders of the republic to-morrow, are thinking about, what high themes are being discust in lecture halls and chapels, what ideals are offered for the home and the school, the market-place and the legislative hall, and what principles are being laid down, as highways along which the soul, like a chariot, may move heavenward. No task to-day is more difficult than that of the

preacher who must go into the pulpit twice each week, to instruct men, and rebuke them, to inspire, comfort, and regenerate them. The preacher must speak oftener than the lawyer, visit more than the doctor, produce more pages than the editor, teach with the patience of the professor, and therefore the preacher must always be at his best.

The standard of preaching also, in the ministry, demanded by the pew, has been exalted. One university-bred man in the pew makes it necessary for the minister to go up to the level of that best man, for while he can not know more about law than the lawyer, or as much about business as the banker, there is one subject about which the minister must know more than the wisest man in his congregation: he must be a master in the spiritual realm, he must speak with the note of authority upon religion, he must know where are the paths that lead to peace. The minister fails unless he brings sight to the blind, medicine to the sick, comfort to the comfortless, and life to those that are in the region and shadow of death. Little wonder that Harnack thinks the sermon the most

difficult of all intellectual achievements, and that Ruskin affirmed that the most precious half-hour in all the week was that hour when "a company of men and women, breathless and weary with the week's labor, have come in after six days' exposure to the full weight of the world's temptation, when the thorn and the thistles have been springing in the heart, and the scattered wheat has been snatched from the wayside by this bird and the other, and the minister has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors, where the Master Himself has stood and knocked, yet none opened, to call at the openings of those dark streets, where Wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hand and no man regarded." Thirty minutes in which to raise the dead, and these minutes are laden with more issues of happiness, social prosperity and peace, than all the other minutes of the week of work.

In calling the roll of the editors, authors,

and college professors it may be doubted if any such body of homiletic wisdom and knowledge has ever before been brought together in a single series. Most of these authors have been in the active ministry, but are now related to colleges and universities, or have taken up the task of editor and author. They are therefore experts in their chosen realm. They are artists and masters of the homiletic craft. They teach the young minister how to preach by preaching. Pointing to these sermons, the publishers can say, "These are the fruits grown in the homiletic garden of the republic." These sermons have been preached before national assemblies, educational gatherings, have been heard by college students and scientific bodies. We are interested in the sword with which the hero won his victory, and in the sermon with which a scholar has lifted and refreshed a thousand weary men. The thoughtful man who lingers long over these pages will be stirred to pride by the quality of thinking that is now presented in sermons in our colleges, seminaries and universities. Verily, the students that listen to these teachers dwell midst perpetual summer.

INTRODUCTION

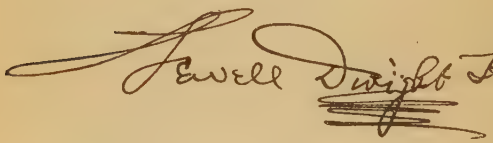
That which impresses the reader in going over these pages is the new scientific spirit that has entered the seminary hall and the college chapel. Evidently, our leading scholars are making more of the scientific method in religion, and using experiment and observation as tests of truth, not less than the old standards of instinct and intuition. College-men want the facts in the case. Our educators are making a first-hand statement of nature and life. Dealing with the simplicities, these scholars have presented the great realities of the human soul made in the image of God. No greater themes than these can ever engage the attention of the intellect. Is there a God who dwells behind the stars? Is there a Providence that cares for man? What is the ground of duty? What is virtue? Can a perfect God permit evil? Is the Divine Being justified in ever forgiving sin in a world of law and justice? Can a bad man ever return to the hour when the heart was young? Is there any place for prayer in a world of law? Does man represent life or mechanism? Does death end all? Are our rich men to bring about a revival of

paganism? Can Christianity conquer the slums at one extreme, and the palaces of luxury at the other? What is to become of the republic if the Sunday, the soul's library day, is overthrown? It is good to have the fundamental principles underlying these questions stated by scholars who have gone to the bottom of things, enforced by the experience and culture of authors and editors, who have traveled widely, observed carefully, and tested their thinking in the school of experience.

A review of these pages also indicates that so far from our great educators dwelling aloof from the interests of the market-place and the street, they are becoming increasingly interested in the social problems, and are more closely knitted into the texture of their time. Indeed, these sermons are notable for their straightforward speech, their practical application to daily affairs, and the interest of their authors in the world of to-day. Without losing their interest in the background of history, or neglecting the message of the prophets and the apostles, more and more our scholars are giving themselves to the big practical events of the world

about them. The time has gone forever when educated men can sit in the study and dream their dreams, and see their visions, while the pilgrim host is out in the darkness and storm, blundering and stumbling, sinning and cursing, repenting and dying, without physician, without shepherd or leader. The scholar's place is at the head of the pilgrim host. The sage may feed his lamp in solitude, but when the blaze flames brightly he must carry it into the night, to lead his little band of pilgrims through the storm, to the distant home. Medicine must be taken to the sick, leaven must be cast into the meal, and culture must lead. For the doing that makes commerce is born of the thinking that makes scholars. All the flying of looms and the whirling of the spindles begins with the thought of some scholar hidden in his closet, or musing in some cloister. The test of our colleges and schools is the kind of leaders they are raising up. Plainly the interests of the mother land and of this republic are safe in the hands of men who are lifting up these ideals, urging such considerations of individual worth and Christian manhood as are pre-

sented in these pages. The busy pastor, the theological student, the man of affairs, who would fain carry away not the gleaner's handful, but ripe sheaves, will find these ten volumes a treasury of learning, a storehouse of information, an armory full of weapons for to-morrow's battles, a library stored with wisdom for to-morrow's emergencies.



Brooklyn, New York,
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ABBOTT

THE SECRET OF CHARACTER

LYMAN ABBOTT

Editor of *The Outlook;* born Roxbury, Mass., December 18, 1835; graduated from the University of New York, 1853; practised law, and is now a member of the New York State bar; ordained a Congregational minister in 1860; pastor in Terre Haute, Ind., 1860-65; New England church, New York, 1865-69; resigned the pastorate in 1869 to engage in literature; edited "Literary Record" of *Harper's Magazine;* associate editor of *The Christian Union* with Henry Ward Beecher, whom he succeeded as pastor of Plymouth church, Brooklyn, May, 1888; resigned November, 1898; D.D. universities of New York and Harvard, and LL.D. Western Reserve University; author of "Jesus of Nazareth," "Old Testament Shadows of New Testament Truths," "The Layman's Story," "How to Study the Bible," "Illustrated Commentary on the New Testament," "Dictionary of Religious Knowledge," "Study in Human Nature," "In Aid of Faith," "Life of Christ," "Evolution of Christianity," etc.

THE SECRET OF CHARACTER

LYMAN ABBOTT, D.D., LL.D.

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."—John 1 : 13.

IN these words John deals with the sources of character. "Christ," he says, "came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Four sources or springs of character, four grounds of expectation of human development, are put here in contrast.

True character is not born of blood. It does not depend upon inheritance. Men are neither great nor good merely because they have a great and good ancestry. The value of a nation does not depend, fundamentally and finally, on its past history, nor on a race. History abundantly demonstrates that. When John wrote these words the Jews prided themselves on being children of Abraham. They were born of good blood—and that was enough. And nobody could compete with them in character or in the race for acceptance with God, because they were born of Abraham. "We be children of Abraham," said the Jews to Christ. This was enough.

At the time these words were written there were other men who said: "We be Romans." That was enough. "I am a Roman," was the proud boast and the adequate boast. There was nothing more to be said. This was the final, the complete claim. And yet the Jewish nation has disappeared as a nation, dispersed among all races. And the Roman nation has disappeared, broken down, tho out of its roots has grown a new race—a new nation. The Englishman is proud of being an Englishman. That is enough. The Englishman's national and personal pride are the subjects of numerous jests, and the satires, often originating with one of his own people, are significant of a real sentiment among our insular brethren. And we laugh at it. We do not think it is enough to be a Jew, or enough to have been a Roman, or enough to have been an Englishman. But I wonder if there are not some of us who think it is enough to be an American. The same pride of race crosses the ocean and crosses the centuries, and you hear it here to-day—"the American idea," "the American civilization," "the American church," "the American religion," "the American education," "the American democracy"—put the stamp "American" on anything and it is all right. No higher praise to be given anything than that it is American; no stronger condemnation of anything than that it is un-American. Now, too, we are

beginning to trace our lineage back. We are sons of the Puritans. We are sons of the Revolution. We are sons of the *Mayflower*. And some of us are getting across the ocean and trying to find ourselves as sons of families back of the *Mayflower*.

John says character does not depend on inheritance. Inheritance is valuable; it has its place; but it is not the foundation of character. A man may be a child of Abraham and be degenerate; he may be a Roman, and be base; he may be an Anglo-Saxon and be mean; he may be an Englishman and be vicious; and he may even be an American and go to pieces. Not only that—the whole race of Jews, and the whole race of Romans, and the whole race of Englishmen, and the whole race of Americans may go to pieces, if all that they depend upon is that they are born of good blood.

Good blood does not make character, and bad blood does not destroy it. I shall never forget the conversation I had some years ago with one of the best experts in insanity in this country. He said to me—and the declaration startled me—"Insanity is never inherited." And when I exprest my surprize, he repeated this affirmation: "Insanity is never inherited." And I said: "What is inherited?" He replied, "A man may inherit such weakness that he will be liable to insanity. But when a man comes to me and

says: 'My father was insane and my grandfather was insane, and I am afraid I am going to be insane,' I say to him: 'My dear sir, you are the man that ought not to be insane, for you have a warning; you know against what you need to guard; you know how you need to guard yourself.' The man whose father and mother and grandfather and grandmother were insane is just the man that ought not to go insane, for he knows what are his weaknesses, and he knows how to guard himself against them. No man ever inherits insanity."

No man ever inherited sin. There is not any original sin. Men inherit appetites and passions, they inherit temptations, they inherit weaknesses and frailties and infirmities, but they do not inherit sin and they do not inherit virtue. Virtue can not be handed down from father to son. Character can not be so wrought that it may be easier for your son to keep from falling into sin. Weakness may be handed down, so that it will be easier for your son to fall into sin, but virtue is victory by the individual himself over temptation that assails himself, and the victory can not be won by another and the defeat can not be suffered by another. Men are neither born sinners nor born saints. Character does not depend on blood.

It does not depend on the will of the flesh. Flesh, as that term is used in the New Testa-

ment, especially by Paul, means the animal man. Character does not depend upon a strong, virile, vigorous, stalwart will in the man himself. The value of government does not depend on strong will, by a king, by an aristocracy, nor yet by a democracy. There was a strong government in Rome, and Rome went to pieces. There was a strong government in France, and that went to pieces. Strength of will in an enthroned power exerting itself over the community, does not make a strong, safe, permanent, enduring government. De Tocqueville said: "The peril to America is in the great cities, and unless America has an armed force, independent of the cities, by which it can keep order in the cities, I foresee the destruction of the American republic from municipal populations." A strong military force, independent of the cities, ruled by the State or ruled by the nation, and exercising authority over the cities, will not prevent the destruction of the nation from foreign and disorderly populations in the cities. Build your buildings for the soldiery as large as you please, make them strong, make the windows as narrow, fill them with soldiers as well trained, all that may be necessary for protection from imminent and impending peril, but that will not save the nation. No nation ever yet was saved by a bayonet. No nation ever will be saved by a bayonet. No military force can protect a

nation permanently from the disorder and disaster of anarchy. The remedy must go down deeper. A strong will and a strong man to exercise the strong will can not make a nation safe.

It will not make the home safe. There are plenty of fathers who think that the family will be safe if they only govern their child well. "Govern a child in the way he should go," is the way they read the passage, "and when he is old he will not depart from it"; and they do govern him in the way he should go, but he does depart from it. It has been the common experience of families over and over again. I do not say that children should not be governed, but unless the father can do something else than govern the child, he is a failure. It is not enough to keep the boy off the street; you must make him wish to stay off the street. It is not enough to keep him in school; you must make him want the school. It is not enough to prevent him from smoking or drinking; you must make him hate self-indulgence and sensuality. You must make the life and the power within work out. You can not save him by anything that is from without working inward. You can not do this in the nation; you can not in the family.

These two processes—power working from without in restraint, power working from within developing—were set in marked con-

trast in the last century. France was threatened by revolution, and England was threatened by revolution. The same forces exactly were boiling in England as in France, and France had a standing army and a Bourbon king and a military power, and France exploded. England had no such military force to overawe its own population, but it had a Protestant Church, and it had the Wesleyan movement, and it had a great educational movement going on within its boundaries, and England developed out of the very Chartist elements a larger and a better and a nobler life. We did not restore the Union when Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court-house, we only got a chance to restore the Union. If, after that surrender, South Carolina and Georgia and Alabama and Mississippi had still held their old grudge against the North, if no free schools had been built up, if no commerce had prest in, if no manufacturing had followed, if there had been no rebanding together, man with man, if we had followed the Civil War with executions and kept the bad blood in our veins, we should have had a dissevered nation, altho one flag had floated over us. You can not make a nation one with a cordon of forts and an armed band. Appomattox Court-house gave us the chance; but it was the school, the missionary, the merchant, the manufacturer, the traveling agent, the salesman, the whole life of the

North poured out into the South, that knit together the dissevered Union and made the nation one.

What is true of the nation and of the family is true of the individual. The strength and the hope of the individual is not in a strong, stalwart will. It is a good thing to have a strong will. Wo to the father who says: "I will break the will of my boy." He had better break his back. A boy without will would better die than live. But, nevertheless, no man is saved, to use the theological phrase, no man is made a man, large, strong, rich, full, splendid, by the possession of a strong will. He may be kept from certain forms of vice and iniquity, but that does not make a man. A strong will is like the armor that soldiers used to wear in the olden times. If he only went into battle with the armor on, he might not get killed, but he would do nothing. He must have a strong arm as well as a strong armor. A man with a strong will may be a righteous man, but he will not be, therefore, a good man. A man with a strong will, and nothing else, may be a conscientious man, but he will not be a holy man; he will not carry with him the pervasive, sunny, brooding, inspiring influence which comes from the fountains of life which spring up within the soul itself.

The hope of society and the hope of the individual is not in being born of blood (that

is, good inheritance), nor being born of the will of the flesh (that is, strong will), so, neither is it in being born of what John calls the will of man. The will of the flesh is man simply as an animal, strong, vigorous, determined, resolute. But man is higher than that; he is a domestic man, he is a cultivated man, an educated man; and the modern equivalent of this phrase, "will of man," would be perhaps education. John says, the world can not be saved by inheritance, the world can not be saved by strength of character, the world can not be saved by education.

That is the modern panacea. Go to, we will have an educated people! Then it will be all right. It is foolish to do wrong. Therefore we will make men rational, and then they will cease doing wrong. We have borrowed that philosophy from ancient times and imported and incorporated it here, and now not a few say we can get along without churches, without Bible, without worship, without religion, without higher institutions, because have we not the public schools and (heaven save the mark!) the public press? Teach men to read and write, then they will be saved. Educate them; they will see it is folly to do wrong, and they will cease doing wrong. That is the argument. Does it succeed? Huxley (I do not quote his words) says that the serpent was the subtlest of the

beasts of the field, and we all know what came of that experiment at the beginning of the race. Education is not a panacea. Equip a man with all the powers with which education can equip him, and you simply give him power with which he can carry on selfishness more skilfully and more efficiently than before. It will put an end to certain forms of sin and put others in their place. The educated man will not pick your pocket, he will only forge your name; he will not steal, he will only defalcate. He has learned how to do his robbery, his stealing, his sin on a larger scale, and with somewhat less chance of detection. "Teach this American people to read, and all will go well with it." Well, we do read, we do write. And what is it that we read and write? Take an instance: A horrible murder was discovered, and the headless trunk was found floating in the river. One of our modern journals made a picture of the place and a picture of the crowd looking on, and a picture of the trunk, with all the marks to show where the head was taken off and what limbs were gone. Another journal interviewed one who had committed a horrible murder only a few months before, and had decapitated the victim and had carried the trunk off in one quarter and the head in another—interviewed him to get his expert judgment as a murderer on the question how this newer murder was committed; and the expert murderer was

proud of the interview that had been accorded him. And this is what we are getting by the simple ability to read and write, without the moral ability to discriminate what we read and what we write. We have a little discrimination. It is mostly apparent in our wives and our mothers. They will not have these journals in the house. So out of respect for them, we do not subscribe for them; but as soon as we go out of the house, we buy them of the newsboys and read them on the trains. There ought to be such a public sentiment in America, and it ought to go forth from the Christian churches, that a man would count himself disgraced if there was seen in his hand some papers which I will not mention, because I do not care to advertise them. Can you not see whither we are going? Can you not see the tendency of this vile journalism? I do not say we shall reach the result (God grant that we do not!), but can not you see what it means? First, we have yellow-covered stories that tell all awful horrors. When there has been educated a constituency by that literature and the boys and girls have grown to men and women, there grows up a press that elaborates with great exaggeration all suicides, murders, and horrible crimes. Now we are feeding on those. Do you know what comes next? When Rome was no longer satisfied with mimic shows of horror, she made real ones. When

she was no longer sufficiently satisfied with the tragic stories, she made actual tragedies—flung over men to wild beasts in spectacular shows that she might rejoice in their agonies. That is the way in which we are walking. You can not feed children on yellow-covered stories without raising men and women that want yellow newspapers; and you can not feed men and women on yellow newspapers without kindling a passion that will want tragedy in actual life, and will make it when it does not come itself.

The hope of the world is not in inheritance, not in government, not in education; it is in God. Do you know what the duty of a minister is? It is to say the same thing Sunday after Sunday, and trying so to say it that people will listen to him and forget that it is an old story while he is saying it. The hope of America, your hope, my hope, is not in inheritance—Sons of the Revolution, Daughters of the Revolution, Sons of the Mayflower, Daughters of the Mayflower, Sons of the Puritans, or in any such thing. It is not in strong government, in politics, or in family, or in vigorous self-will. It is not in public schools, unless the public school learns how to educate the conscience as well as the intellect. It is in God, who may use all these, and through all these may speak to the souls of His children. There is no more hope of an Anglo-Saxon race than of a Latin

race, unless the Anglo-Saxon race gets nearer to God. There is no more hope for an American people than for a Roman people, unless the American people understand God better than the Romans did. There is no more hope for a strong government than for a weak government, unless we understand that God is the great Governor and all sanction of law comes from His authority. There is no more hope in an educated people than in an ignorant people, unless their education has taught them right and wrong, and God, as the interpreter of right and wrong, and God's own nature as the reservoir of all righteousness from which all life and hatred of wrong must come forth.

Two men sit side by side—in this very congregation perhaps. One looks back through a long line of ancestry, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, running back across the sea to splendid progenitors in England. My friend, the greatness and goodness of your father will not make you great nor good. Many a great man has had a little son, and many a noble man has had an ignoble son. By his side sits another, a child without genealogy. He knows not where his father or his mother came from, nor anything of his parentage or his birth. My friend, you need not despair of life. Who knows who was the father or the mother of Moses that became statesman of Israel? Who knows to-day the

genealogy of Paul, the greatest philosopher of all time, unless Plato be an exception? Rise up, take God for your Father and in Him have an inheritance that runs beyond all human inheritance. Two other men sit side by side. One strong of will. "I fear nothing," he says. "I smoke to-day, I can cast away my cigar to-morrow. I drink to-day, I can give up drinking to-morrow. I fear nothing; I can walk in life; I am strong." Perhaps you are; I do not know. Being strong may protect you; but it will not make you a friend, a sympathizer, a helper of another; you must have something deeper and stronger and better than a selfish life for that. By his side sits another weak man. He has resolved again and again. Again and again he has broken his resolution. His whole life is strewed with broken resolutions. My friends, life does not depend on a strong will; it depends on a divinely reenforced will, and you can have God for the asking. Side by side sit two other men. One has had his school, his college and his university education, and his post-graduate course, and has gone abroad, and knows two or three languages. And he is equipped. Yes, equipped! But what are you going to do with your equipment? That is to be answered by your moral and spiritual nature, and the larger your equipment, the worse your life, if you do not know how to use that which you possess. And by his side

sits another man who can scarcely write at all and stumbles in his reading. There is one text for you both: Knowledge shall vanish away; but faith, hope and love abide forever. You are measured, not by your learning, but by the use you make of it. The most influential man of all time—think what you may of His divinity—Jesus of Nazareth, was never at a university but one day in his life, and had no other schooling than such as was furnished him by the synagog school at Nazareth.

Character is not due to inheritance, willpower, culture; it is due to the life of God, wrought by His peace in the soul of man. Born, not of blood—inheritance; not of the will of the flesh—government; not of the will of man—education; but of the God who is brooding the race, of the God who has come into the life of Christ, of the God who stands at the door of your heart and your life, saying: "Let me come into you and make you a child of God."

ADENEY

TRUTH IN JESUS

W. F. ADENEY

PRINCIPAL of Lancashire Independent College since 1903; born Ealing, Middlesex, England; educated New College, London; seventeen years Congregational minister at Acton; fourteen years professor of New Testament exegesis and Church history at Hackney College, London; lecturer in history of doctrine at the University of Manchester; editor of the "Century Bible"; D.D. from St. Andrew's, Scotland; author of "The Hebrew Utopia," "From Christ to Constantine," "From Constantine to Charles the Great," "Theology of the New Testament" (which has been translated into Japanese), "Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther," "Canticles and Lamentations" (Expositor's Bible), "Women of the New Testament," "How to Read the Bible," "A Century's Progress," "St. Luke and Galatians and Thessalonians" (Century Bible), etc.

TRUTH IN JESUS

The Rev. Prin. Walter F. Adeney, M.A.

"As truth is in Jesus."—Eph. 4 : 21.

We hear this phrase very frequently quoted, but too often in ways that miss the pith and point of it. Sometimes it is used quite indefinitely, for the whole realm of Christian doctrine; and sometimes it is applied in a peculiar manner to a singularly constricted scheme of ideas to which its admirers confine that great word "gospel." Both of these usages show a failure to catch the original tone of the phrase.

This should be suggested to us by the simplicity of the name of our Lord. It is just "Jesus"—the bare personal name, shorn of all titles and honors, of all reference to His kingship and divine nature. That is quite unusual in the epistles—most unusual with Paul. In the epistles—especially in Paul's Epistles—we nearly always have some such expression as "Jesus Christ," "Christ Jesus," "Christ" alone, "the Lord," "the Lord Jesus Christ." But when we go back to the gospels we come upon the simple name "Jesus." In a word, that is the name our Lord bears in the gospels, while "Christ" is specifically His name in the epistles.

Now this is not merely a question of words. "Jesus" was our Lord's personal name, the name by which He was known in His boyhood and obscurity at Nazareth, before any dreamed who He was, and what He was to become; it was the name by which He was known to the end by those people who rejected His high claims.

Why, then, does Paul here strip the name of the titles of honor and reverence which the disciples had learned to attach to it? If we examine a few of their passages in the epistles where this is done, we shall see that they all point in one and the same direction. They all call our attention to the earthly life of our Lord, to that life which we have in the gospel story.

Truth in Jesus, then, is truth in the life of Jesus on earth; to us it is truth contained and revealed in the gospel story.

But, you will ask, why, then, was this not stated more clearly? Why do we not read "the truth which Jesus taught?" Because, there is a closer relation between Jesus and truth than there is between the mere teacher and his lesson. As a matter of fact, I suppose nobody can teach well any truth except that which is in him. A man must have assimilated an idea and made it part of himself before he can impart it effectively to others. Phillips Brooks tells us—and none knew it better than he—that a sermon should

be truth passing through the experience of the preacher, and Henry Ward Beecher once said, "Preaching is the preacher laying his heart on the people."

But it is even more than that with our Lord's teaching of truth; because His vital and personal relation to it is peculiarly intimate. John the Baptist was "a voice crying in the wilderness"—a voice, the message everything, the speaker a negligible quantity. But Jesus is more than a voice—He is truth incarnate. So He can say, "I am the light of the world," "I am the truth."

We often hear of the return to Christ which our age has witnessed, and if we ask, what are the most modern ideas in religion? the answer is, "The ideas of the Sermon on the Mount." Apparently some people are just discovering these ideas for the first time—to them; and the discovery is a perfect revelation for them. But we have not all the truth Jesus is prepared to give us when we have His words. The words of Him who spake as never man spake are of incomparable worth. When a scrap of a papyrus containing six or eight very doubtful sentences ascribed to our Lord is discovered, its contents are devoured with the keenest interest. There is an admirable little book entitled, "The Master's Guide," in which the sayings of Jesus collected from the New Testament are arranged under the headings of various topics.

You can not read such a book without feeling that what it contains is altogether unique. Here we have the regalia of the kingdom of heaven, every sentence a gem. And yet we should be heavy losers if we gave up the four gospels in exchange for such a book as this. It is not enough to know what Jesus said. We want to know Jesus Himself, Jesus as He is revealed in deed and life as well as in word and teaching. Here we have the truth He brings to us in its fulness and vitality and power—"as truth is in Jesus."

Now we are often reminded that this is an age when Pilate's weary question—perhaps I should say his cynical question: "What is truth?" is being asked with a new intensity of interest. It is an age of many questions. Unfortunately, it is also an age of many answers, an age of many voices all clamorous for a hearing, each offering its own solution of the riddles of existence. If any of us are driven to seek peace in the intellectual Nirvana of agnosticism, it is not for want of a gospel, it is rather from the bewilderment of the claims of too many gospels. But how otherwise are we to escape from this confusion of cries, this babel of utterances, and all the perplexity it engenders and the despair of ever reaching truth to which it points?

I answer, we must turn a deaf ear to the whole of them, and seek truth in Jesus. We must leave the library and enter our chamber;

take with us our New Testament; turn to the gospels; make a study of them—a study with this specific end in view—to discover truth.

Immediately we begin thus to study Jesus, so to say, at first hand in these gospel portraits, one characteristic most strikes us. As a leader He is quite sure of what He has to say. There is a ring of certainty in all His words. Never was there a teacher more positive, if you like to put it so, more dogmatic. We have our views, we cherish our opinions, we balance arguments and measure probabilities. You never find Jesus doing anything of the kind. You never hear Him talking of His views or His opinions; you never hear Him speaking in our hazy style: "On the whole, considering all the facts of the case, I am inclined to venture the assertion that this or that may turn out to be the explanation of it." If you discovered a new *logion* in language such as that, you would declare it a forgery beyond doubt. For the style of Jesus, even when dealing with the most profound mysteries of existence, is thus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." I do not say that He claimed omniscience on earth. He even repudiated it. But what He did assert He asserted with unhesitating decision.

But is it enough to be positive? We all of us know very positive people—popes who claim infallibility, altho no Vatican council has voted it them—and we are not inclined

to surrender our judgment to them on demand. Do we not often find people to be positive exactly in proportion to the limited range of their knowledge? The less a person knows the more sure he is of everything; while the wider his horizon becomes, the slower and more hesitating he will be in making a distinct assertion.

It is not enough, then, to say that anyone is very positive. We must first face the question as to who it is that speaks to us with this singular decisiveness. I doubt not there are many among us who are perfectly satisfied on that point, who are well assured that Jesus is the very Son of God dwelling ever in the bosom of the Father, who can almost see the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

But if it be the case that we have not all reached this position of calm assurance, if the uncertainty and questioning of the age have driven some of us into wondering thoughts about the very being and nature of Christ, how is it possible to take His direct assurance as the settlement of all doubt? We must begin at a more preliminary stage.

Consider the case of the expert, who condescends to leave his advanced studies for a little while, and instruct us in some of the more elementary principles of his science. What a firm grip he has of the subject! With what ease he moves from point to point! His

only difficulty is not to go too far, and lead his audience out of their depth. Plainly, he is master of the situation. And when he sits down nothing pleases him better than to be questioned on anything in the lecture. At once he is ready to explain it more fully, and his *ex tempore* explanation is as learned and as masterly as the set lecture. You can not take him at a disadvantage. You can sit at the feet of such a man with the utmost confidence. Clearly he has a right to speak with authority.

Now is it not clear, when you study the gospel story, that Jesus is an expert in religion, by the side of whom the greatest theologian appears but as an amateur dabbling in a subject too large for him? It may seem almost irreverent to use such a title as "expert" for Jesus Christ; He is so much more. But then He is at least that. Here, surely, we may be all agreed. What is to us, alas! too much a strange subject, one that we neglect for a multitude of minor interests, was to Him a region in which He was perfectly at home. He lived in it and spoke out from it as from the depths of His daily experience.

It is as when a party of travelers climbing some wild and dangerous mountain find themselves enveloped in cloud. All trace of direction is lost. A yawning gulf may be at their feet. But one is well on in advance of the rest. He has reached the ridge and passed

the cloud; and he calls back to the others, "It is all clear here; I can see the way right on to the summit; follow me and you will be safe." His position of advance gives him authority to speak. As we listen to the voice of Jesus coming to us through the clinging mists that blot out the landscapes for us and chill our hearts, we discover that this is a voice from the heights. Is it nothing that Jesus can say, "Follow me! He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness?" He, too, is on the mountain above us—how far exalted, perhaps we may not yet see; but, at all events, well in advance—yes, and well in advance of all the world's great thinkers and teachers of religion. Is it nothing that from this high ground He speaks with the voice of sure knowledge and decisive utterance? And then, as I have said, it is not only by His words that He guides us. His person, His life, His character are luminous and illuminating.

Let us see how this conception of truth, as truth is in Jesus, may apply to various regions of thought and life, and consider what answer to the questions that most perplex us may be found in the Jesus of the gospels, in the actual contents of these records. The inquiry is not mystical; it is literary and historical. As such it may not be finally satisfactory to all minds, still it is the path of light.

First, let us look at the region of the practical. The deepest, darkest doubt—a doubt vastly more unsettling than any amount of speculative uncertainty, worse even than what is called religious skepticism, because it cuts at the root of all religion and all goodness—is moral doubt. So long as a man can keep "conscience as the noontide clear," with unhesitating faith in goodness and unwavering determination to pursue it at all hazards, he can never be utterly at sea. All may seem lost, sky and ocean mixed in the fury of tempest; and yet, while the anchor of conscience holds, the vessel will ride the storm. But if this anchor is dragged, if the very fundamental ideas of right and wrong are tossing in confusion, the peril is great indeed. There is absolutely nothing to prevent drifting on to the rocks. It is no longer the eclipse of faith. It is the shipwreck of faith. Beware of that horror of horrors—moral skepticism.

But how is it to be escaped? When we turn from theory to fact, the world, as we see it, does not seem to show that sharp distinction, that impassable gulf, that vast distance as from pole to pole, between good and evil. The two are strangely intermingled. If even a good man looks down into the lower regions of his nature, he may be startled to discover there the lurking possibilities of the crimes of a Borgia. When some one who has been respected universally as a pillar of vir-

tue suddenly falls, or is suddenly found out in some base action, the sight of such unexpected wickedness sends a shock through society, and tempts the world to say that all men are alike; or with the only difference that some sin openly while others hide their misdeeds; that some are honest knaves and the rest but hypocrites.

This miserable cynicism must shrink for very shame in the presence of Jesus Christ. Will anybody venture to read the story of His life and still maintain that there is no reality in goodness? For see what it comes to! If virtue is a myth, if the moral law is an illusion, if there is no essential distinction between good and evil, then there is no essential distinction between Jesus Christ and Judas Iscariot. And by all the appalling distance from the awful purity of the Savior to the sordid vileness of the traitor, the essential distinction between good and evil is proved to us. If not in St. Francis, if not in John, if in no saint, or martyr, or apostle, still, as the last resort, in Jesus, assuredly, we can see the moral law vindicated. He magnifies this law and makes it honorable. He established the eternal reality of goodness. That truth we may see in Jesus.

The frequency of failure provokes the further question whether life is not altogether a mistake. As some lives are spent, it is difficult to resist that dismal conclusion. There

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are stained and misshapen lives that appear like spots and blotches in creation, their very existence a blight upon society. Are there not, too, multitudes of lives which, if not thus stamped with offensiveness, yet are no comfort to the livers of them and no blessing to others—poor, withered, doleful lives spent in a round of weary drudgery, with no prospect of relief but by the merciful hand of death? I am afraid it must be admitted there are ways of living that do not seem to make life worth the trouble of lungs in drawing breath, and heart in driving blood to keep them going. It is possible for any of us to live in such a mode—servile in poverty or self-indulgent in luxury. It might be well for all of us occasionally to put the question to ourselves point blank, Are we living in a way that is worth all the cost to ourselves and others?

But can anybody ask that question concerning Jesus Christ? To His contemporaries He was a failure, meeting the doom of the enthusiast who braves the conventions of the world, cut off in young manhood, tortured and killed by the death of the vilest criminal. And yet, we know that He did not fail. If ever any life was a success, the life of Jesus was. It was the life which reversed the whole course of history, and laid the foundation of the upward movement of mankind. Life a failure? Apparently so in some instances, as

far as we can see in this world; but not the life of the Crucified. And, therefore, we may conclude that just in proportion as we follow Christ our lives, too, will not fail. I do not know what to say of many lives, but looking at it in the light of truth, I am perfectly certain that the Christian life, the life of self-denial and service, cross-bearing and Christ-likeness, is not and can not be a failure. This is as the truth of life is in Jesus.

The same rule applies when we turn to more mysterious regions of speculative inquiry. Questions are raised concerning the nature of Christ, such questions as rent the Church in fierce internal conflicts in the ages of the great Christian fathers. Out of these conflicts came the creeds that were to settle the dogmas of the believer for all subsequent ages. But to many of us these creeds are not final utterances. They affirm, they do not prove, neither do they explain. To some people they only appear to "darken counsel with words without knowledge." It is not thus that we determine any truth of science. Why should we expect to settle theological truth in so preposterous a method of finality? Why should the twentieth century bow down to the fourth century, dumb and submissive, in this the most difficult of questions, and in this alone? Surely, we have learned a more excellent way. The naturalist is not satisfied to study in old libraries; he examines the

objects of nature. It is this inductive method of Bacon that opened the door to science. Is it unreasonable to apply the same method in religion? If we do, the right way to know Christ is not to analyze creeds, it is to make a study of the Jesus of the gospels. What a picture we have there—babe of Bethlehem, boy at Nazareth, carpenter in the workshop, preacher by the lakeside, brother in the home, healer of the sick, victim on the cross, first-born from the dead! Watch Him as He moves along His brief, strange course. Humblest of men, yet making the highest claims; most modest, yet never confessing to a fault.

A person of dull conscience may defend himself against all fault-finding. As a rule, this unruffled sense of rectitude is exactly proportionate to the torpor of conscience. The awakened conscience is self-accusing. And so it comes about that the holiest man is the most eager to repudiate the title to holiness, that the saint is the first to confess himself a sinner.

But Jesus makes no such confession. He is keenly alive to the evil of sin, and He is unfaltering in the denunciation of hypocrisy. We can not say He is callous and indifferent to evil. Yet He never confesses sin of His own; claiming to forgive sin in others, He always speaks as tho there were none in Himself. And His life bears out this personal conviction. Neither is He conscious of sin,

nor can anybody detect it in Him. This is the first wonder of His life—the sinlessness of Jesus. In this He is quite alone and apart. How shall we explain it? He gives us His own explanation: "I and my Father are one." Apostles, evangelists, those who watched Him most closely, who knew Him best, give the same explanation when they describe Him as the Son of God. I can see no other adequate explanation of the gospel record than this assertion of the divinity of Christ. This is not merely a dogma of the creeds—it is a truth in Jesus, a truth in the gospels, a truth that shines out of the ancient pages; to my mind and to many minds the only way of accounting for what is recorded there.

Again, it may be that we are opprest with the larger mystery of existence. What is the meaning of this vast, perplexing system of things, in the midst of which we live, which we call universe? Is it but an interminable nexus of forces, or is there mind behind force? Is there God? If so, what is God? The existence of the world points to a cause; the order of the universe suggests a mind; the beauty of nature a soul; the bountifulness of life a heart. And yet, when we have reached these conclusions, Mill's terrible indictment of nature confronts us. Apparently all is not wise and good. Earthquakes, famine, flood, plague—what are these?

But here is the dilemma—if there is no God, in the end we must go back to chance, and chaos is the parent of all things. Evolution introduces an orderly process, but it is only a process, a method, not a cause. Evolution inspired by God is a sublime theory of creation. Evolution without God is but a product of chance. Then even with this theory we are forced back on something like the daring epicurean notion so brilliantly set forth by the Roman poet Lucretius—a fortuitous concourse of atoms, falling, as he had it, through space, and jostling one another incessantly in the vast cascade of them till they ultimately chance to fall into a condition of order. If that be true, then Jesus Christ is the result of such a chance, a product of blind and purposeless evolution—His life but as one speck of foam flung up from the dark ocean of existence.

And further, if there is no mind in the universe, if the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, then we must come to this wild and desperate conclusion that the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the prodigal son are by-products of certain chance combinations of phosphates and nitrates in the brain of an organism to which we misleadingly attach the greatest of names. It is abhorrent to state such a conclusion; yet we must be honest; we must be consistent. There is no alternative. This is the conclusion to which we

must be driven on the materialistic hypothesis.

Philosophers have described animals as automatons, and there are men whose sheer animalism of existence encourages the hypothesis. These are the excuses for materialism. But it breaks down utterly in the presence of Jesus. The credulity of the Christian is as nothing to the credulity of the materialist who can believe that all we read in the gospel story is but a fine and vaporous emanation of chemical elements. The being of God and the existence of mind, of soul, of spirit, are vindicated by the very being of Jesus. These truths are to be seen in Him.

There is one more question to which I wish to apply this solvent of the truth that is found in the gospels, the truth as it is in Jesus—the question of a future life. We must all feel that much of what is said on this subject will not bear a very close scrutiny. There are times when we can not be satisfied with conventional notions. When we stand by the open grave of a very dear friend, or when the doctor has warned us that we should do well to put our affairs in order, as the summons may come to us at any moment; when it has become clear that close at hand "the shadow sits and waits for us," then, in these moments of intense reality, we can not be satisfied with the flowers of hymnology and pulpit eloquence, and we ask in grim

earnest Job's straight question: "If a man die shall he live again?"

What is Christ's answer to that pregnant question. It is a very remarkable answer—quite one by itself—reticent, yet clear and positive. Jesus paints no fancy pictures of elysian fields where happy souls walk in meads of asphodel; He draws no plan of a heavenly city with gates of pearl and streets of gold. To the curiosity that hungers for information about the forms and manners of the life beyond He is perfectly silent. But to the deeper hunger for life after death He is most reassuring. He is as positive on this subject as on any other. His words are few, but they are quite clear and absolutely unwavering. While we halt and hesitate, and falter and tremble, before the mystery of death, He, above our mists, standing there in the light, is certain. Surely, this means much!

What can be more decisive than such words as these: "He that believeth in me, tho he were dead, yet shall he live"; "in my Father's house are many places of rest. If it were not so I would have told you." I do not know any statement of the case more exact and true than that in Richard Baxter's most honest hymn:

> My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim;
> But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
> And I shall be with Him.

And here we have a further confirmation beyond the words and direct teaching of Jesus—His own resurrection. Jesus was raised up from the dead; He came back from beyond the shadows—the first-born among many brethren. That is in the record of the gospels. The very existence of the Church—itself a resurrection after the despair of Calvary—is witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and that in turn is witness to the life eternal.

To any, then, who may be distrest by the wild, free questions of our day; to any who may be bewildered by the hosts of conflicting voices each offering its own reply, this is one way of life and guidance. Study the gospels. Come to a first-hand knowledge of Jesus. Learn of Him. Consider what a Master of His subject He is, how clear His vision, how serene His assurance, how positive His utterance, how real His life! All else may waver; mists may gather round the cherished convictions of childhood. Jesus abides, the light of the world and the light of the ages. In Him shall we see light.

BECKWITH

STRENGTH FROM THE INVISIBLE

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STRENGTH FROM THE INVISIBLE

Prof. Clarence A. Beckwith, S.T.D.

"He endured, as seeing him who is invisible."—Heb. 11 : 27.

He endured. The word here means more than if it were said, he bore his burden well; and more than that he waited with long suffering until the end came. It means that he had strength to be stedfast. There was a deep and constant force from within with which he met the strange vicissitudes of his life. In our childhood we learned that Moses was the meekest man; but this word tells us that if he freely bowed himself or was heavily bowed under the discipline of God, yet that he bore all with a still, quiet temper. Thus he endured.

And he endured as if he saw the invisible One. Some scholars interpret this to mean that he endured because he saw God, and point to the statement that he talked with God as a man talks with his friend, face to face. And they refer to the vision granted to him as he stood in the cleft of the rock. But we do not forget that God said, "Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see my face and live." And we remember the words of John, "No man hath seen God at any time."

It is better therefore to think of him as enduring just as one would who beheld the unseen One.

He is not the only one of whom the Bible speaks, the secret of whose life is just here. From first to last, prophets and apostles knew no other principle. Try any other key to their endurance and their lives do not open to your touch. And no one of us can endure in any other way.

In early life, one feels little if any need of this thought. Indeed, then, many of the preacher's words sounded to us far off and strange. They might be true for our elders, but to us they seemed unreal. It was enough for us then if the sun shone, if the fields were white in winter and green in summer, and if the innocent, uncaring days were full of gladness and hope. But as time wore on, more and more demands were made upon us from within. Few persons have entered middle life without passing through some experience which demanded all the forces of the spirit to meet. Through personal loss we have been thrown on our own resources. Some one has become suddenly dependent on us. By force of circumstances we are in a single instant required to assume responsibility for which up to that hour we had felt ourselves wholly unprepared and unequal. Almost without warning a terrible sorrow has blackened all our world, and in our night of grief the sun

and moon were darkened, the stars of heaven fell, and stunned and groping, we felt our way back into light.

We do not need to enumerate such instances. As we go on in life the group of persons long associated with us gradually lessens, and we can but ask, Who next? And when one is taken, how often we exclaim, What shall we do? We can not stop living. We must still go on. We have to take up the burden of existence, now become heavier, and bear it all the days of our appointed time. But the world will never be the same again. Our hearts will never again feel the same lightness and cheer. The shadows will never completely lift. It is childhood now that seems far off and strange. We now know the meaning of bitter tears. The cup of grief from which we shrink is prest to our lips and we have to drain it, perhaps to the very dregs.

In such hours and for future days, how shall we endure? Not surely by drowning our grief in recklessness, not by indifference to it, not by steeling the heart to it, not by resolve against being overcome by it, not merely by saying that better days will come by and by. There is only one way—to endure as if seeing Him who is invisible.

There are other events and other experiences where we have need of the same spirit of stedfast fortitude. Take it, for example, in character. Many of us made our choice

of the Savior in fear and trembling. We knew something of the temptations of the world, and we were not strangers to the instability of our own hearts. But feeling that He was the last resort for help, to Him we came. As time passes, however, instead of deepening peace, we become victims of increasing distress. Our nature, like that of Jacob and Balaam, of David and Simon Peter, is found to be full of contradictions. We would do good, but evil is present with us. We would die the death of the righteous, but in our living drop back to the pursuits of sinners. Brave one moment, the next we become disheartened. On one side the windows of the soul open out toward the hills of God, bathed in celestial light, and we long to climb to their safety and strength; but on the other side our outlook is toward a world that fascinates us with human sin; and, drawn to its fatal spell, we forget the security of the hills and pitch our tents toward Sodom. Explain it how we will, such contradiction, even in men in process of renewal by the spirit of God, is a common experience, and, indeed, I do not believe that in any others it ever comes into such complete and painful prominence. These hearts of ours are infinitely complex and hard to understand. But understood or not, the conflict goes on, and, kept up for years with no perfect and final victory, the contest seems an endless one. God has not

helped us as we expected. We have grown impatient. In some such hour of brooding we have been tempted to fear that our lives were never in the hand of God; that evil is to be conquered, if at all, not in union with God, but wholly by human striving. Perhaps some one advises us to put character on a purely human basis. But the trouble with all this is that any struggling soul, however slight its hold on God, robbed of its heavenly helper, becomes a prey to despair. The one thing that sustained even a feeble faith gone, nothing remains but collapse.

Take again the word that "to them that love God, all things work together for good." Amid all the seeming disasters, the perplexing events of the world, this principle of providence streams down as a light, an explanation, a comfort to the soul. There is no physical agony, no persecution, no dungeon, no deep trial, no death-bed, no bereaved and solitary life to which it may not minister its balm. To this high confidence, in some hour of spiritual exaltation, we may commit ourselves. Or, again, looking out upon the tangled confusion presented by human life, we may while yet at a safe distance make our own the confession of those deep souls who have written:

> Yet in the maddening maze of things
> And tossed by storm and flood,
> To one fixt stake my spirit clings;
> I know that God is good.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprize,
Assured alone that life or death
His mercy underlies.

But now, having voiced our confession, when the supreme hour of trial arrives, and our hearts that then would fain trust are torn with doubt and fear, some friend or some book or some evil thought from within instils the fear that our faith is vain. No doubt it was a pleasant dream, harmless so long as we had no real need of it and could not put it to the test, but now—God can do nothing for us! We are bidden, Take things as they come and make the best of circumstances. Has any soul haunted by such a doubt ever met the trying vicissitudes of our human life with a stedfast fortitude?

The same thing comes up in another form, with respect to prayer and its answer. Jesus said, Ask and ye shall receive. We do lift up lame hands of faith. From childhood we have offered the Lord's Prayer. The simple evening petition taught us by our mother we have not ceased to use. Once and again in stress of need we have, like our Savior, gone apart from men and in an agony prayed to the Father. We are, indeed, convinced that if prayer is not merely the reflection of our earthly troubles and needs, but much rather the act of devotion in which we rise to the consciousness of God and realize that eleva-

tion of spirit above the world in which the unrest that springs from the transient and imperfect forms of particular desires gives place to the sweet and blesséd peace of the life to come—if this is the deepest significance of prayer, then men will need to pray as long as they have human hearts and God has some better thing for them than merely earthly goods. But some wise man whose glass has swept the heavens or brought to light minutest existences, whose test-tube and crucible resolve all substances to their simplest elements, whose scalpel has divided the secret cells of the brain, but found there no inmost dwelling-place of spirit, whose philosophy traces everywhere only an unbroken and endless series of phenomenal cause and effect, this man interrupts your prayer with the remark, "It is only ignorant people who pray." And he silences your praying with his argument or his sneer. But still you feel as praying men have always felt, that the last word on prayer is not to be spoken by a prayerless man. There are many suffering hearts which, if they have to accept this as the final reality on prayer, have nothing to do but to break.

Once more, we see in each of us the tendency of inevitable despair in the fear of approaching death. Death may mean little or nothing to the man who has lived basely; he would not care to continue it, and he is un-

willing to change. But for him whose life has been noble, shining with purity, beaming with unselfishness and sympathy, filled with the spirit of God, to have to feel that death ends all is a terrible blow. To have to believe as we then must that there is earthly struggle but no celestial victory, that the future is a dream and our vision of it a mirage, this will wreck hope in the bravest heart. Yet the air is full of such teaching. One says that we are to be resolved back into the elements whence we came. Another argues that we are immortal only through the influence which we set in motion while yet alive on the earth. Another, with no noble discontent at the narrow conditions of mortality, joins the age-long chorus, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The contagion of this unbelief widely affects society. Many a man who in youth set out to strive mightily against the deadening influence of the world little suspects the quarter whence comes his unnerving. He who falls under the spell of threescore-and-ten earthly years is robbed of the hope of eternal life, and it is not strange that he does not rise above pettiness and vexation and the fear of death into the nobility of the Christian faith.

We come upon the same law as we try to picture the future life. Every one of us has his questions about the unseen world. At times these questions start up in connection

with those long, long thoughts which haunt us when meditating on the meaning of this human life. At other times the final parting with dear ones draws us close up to the veil. We try to present them to ourselves after they are gone. We dream of their condition. We imagine their occupations. We love to believe that they are not too busy nor forgetful to think of us whom they have left behind, and to look forward to the hour when we shall once more join them there. We take the Bible and read what it says of the better land. The intimations that are so shadowy, the language capable of so many interpretations, we would fain reduce to the imagery of earth. We search for help from every quarter. Swedenborg in his "Heaven and Hell," Mrs. Oliphant in her "Little Pilgrim" and her "Land of Darkness," Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in her "Gates Ajar," "The Gates Between," and "Beyond the Gates," these all help us; but yet, after we have done what we may, the eternal life, the glory of God, the celestial city must be grasped by faith and not by sight.

So, then, whether we speak of the vicissitudes of loss and change, of character, of providence, of prayer, of death, of the future life, one law holds good for each alike. We endure in stedfast fortitude just as if we saw the unseen, the One who is invisible.

Here, then, our lives enter into fellowship

with the greatest souls of the ages. We are at one with Moses, who, on unseen but eternal reality, laid the foundation of the Hebrew commonwealth. Here, too, we are united with Gautama, the founder of the still powerful Buddhist faith, who, for the sake of the invisible, turned his back on earthly power and happiness and through his great renunciation became the father of all those who have sought release from the essential emptiness, instability, and misery of this mortal existence. We join hands with Socrates, who, in the prison in his last hours, while the sun was yet high upon the western hilltops, took his farewell of the few friends gathered there—just as later Jesus did in the upper chamber—and having discoursed with them on justice and virtue, on the immortality of the soul, on the inner voice, and on the will of God, sealed with his death the noble idealism for which he had lived. We enter into fellowship with the great souls of the Egyptians, who, establishing the mighty, long-enduring empire of the Pharaohs, building the pyramids, and hewing out the Sphinx, have left us in their Book of the Dead an immortal witness that they also were haunted by the riddle of existence, that their true life was in the unseen and the eternal. We take our place with Columbus, who, in search of a new way, setting sail upon an untracked sea,

> Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way;

with Newton, who held to a law of gravity for all the motions of the heavenly bodies; with Darwin and Spencer in their generalization of evolution as the method by which the unseen universe is continually passing into manifold and radiant forms of existence.

Not alone in those great experiences which have a world-wide reference, but in those which belong to common life does our principle hold true; the mother watching by the bedside of her dying child with heart ready to burst yet restraining her tears, the father who waits and longs for the recovery of his erring son, the youth as he stands before the as yet unrealized ideal of his life, the maiden who is plighting her troth to him with whom her future is to be united in the utmost intimacy of personal association, the scholar as he ponders the problems of the world or of human existence, nay, even every one who lays himself down to sleep trusting to waken refreshed from his slumbers. In a word, all life rises out of and rests back upon an invisible reality to which we owe all that we are or can hope to become. If God is the unity of all that is, the ideal of ideals, the power that supplements our weakness, the source and ground as well as the end of our being, then the truth of our text is the truth of all human life—we endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

When, therefore, this is consciously ac-

cepted, who of us but says that this is the best part of life. Man was not made merely to walk with eyes downcast upon the earth, to delve in its depths, to sail its seas, to amass its treasures, to seek its applause, to be satisfied with its abundance; doing all this, he is not at rest. He seeks with scalpel for the secret of life, with telescope he traces the untrodden pathway of sun and stars, but beyond all he feels that there is a background of spiritual reality, reality of being, of righteousness, of life. The noblest part of man emerges when he lays hold on eternity. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

In such a life appearances however dark, and experiences be they never so painful, are powerless to crush the heart. Not that the Christian man will not have his hours of grief and sense of loss and feelings of depression; he will have his tears, and through sympathy his heart will ache. But he has put his heart above the world, he has put God above man, eternity above time, or rather the world, and man and time get all their meaning for him from his faith in God.

Such a spirit is a conquest. But it does not come simply by wishing. There is no short cut to it. Our Savior has given us the secret, "In your patience ye shall win your souls." The poet also offers us the clue:

Who ne'er in sorrow ate his bread,
Who never in the midnight hours
Sat weeping on his lonely bed—
He knows you not, ye heavenly powers.

It is a precious possession, and he alone wins it who pays the price. It is richly worth the cost of tears and pain and inward struggle and prayer. To let loss and defeated hope and perplexity and the fear of death come upon us with all their crushing power, and then, in the midst of them all, to slowly gather the inner forces of our being as if in full sight of God and thus to push back their deadening weight and stand forth strong and unconquered, this, this is an achievement worthy of the best that is in us. Many of us know what this is, and prize it so highly that if all else were to be taken from us, we would beg that it alone might remain.

For it is this spirit of life which holds the secret of power. No other character is worth anything save that which enshrines those realities whose source and home is in God. One can accomplish nothing which repays the labor except as he draws his inspiration and aim from a world that time and change can not destroy, but can only glorify. When called to suffer, you know that such a one will, indeed, bow the head, and his heart will, for a while, in his grief lie hushed, and, it may be, stunned; but the reed tho bruised is not broken, and when the storm has passed

will lift itself again to receive the light of the sun; and the dimly-burning flax, of which the old prophet spoke, beaten upon by the wind yet unquenched, will burn with a clear, bright flame once more. And when he ministers to others in their sorrow and need, he becomes a tower of strength to them; something of the conquest of his own inner life will pass over into theirs, and in it they will find power to endure as if seeing Him who is invisible.

BEECHER

BARTIMÆUS

WILLIS JUDSON BEECHER

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BARTIMÆUS

WILLIS J. BEECHER, D.D.

"The son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the wayside."—Mark 10 : 46. (Compare Matt. 20 : 29-34; Mark 10 : 46-52; Luke 18 : 35-43.

THREE evangelists give each an account of the healing of a blind beggar near Jericho, within the last weeks of our Savior's ministry, and there are differences in the accounts. In particular, Matthew and Mark say that the healing occurred when Jesus was going out from Jericho, while Luke says that it occurred when He was drawing near to Jericho. Luke says that the healing was that of a certain blind man, and Mark mentions this blind man by name, while Matthew speaks of two blind men and uses his verbs and pronouns in the plural. Owing to these differences, some have held that the different evangelists refer to different incidents. It seems to me, however, that the majority are correct in regarding the three as accounts of the same event.

Jesus probably spent some days at Jericho. Each day He and His disciples made excursions out from the city, for the purposes of His mission, and returned at evening. The healing may have occurred when they went out from the city on one of these excursions, and during

that part of the excursion when they approached the city on their return. It is clear that Bartimæus had some prominence among the disciples, and the story was especially interesting as being that of this well-known person. If he had a companion, it is not strange that some of the narrators should mention the fact and others should not, even tho both men became followers of Jesus. Mark and Luke do not mention his companion, but they do not deny that he had one.

If we thus put all the particulars together, we find in the gospels four sharply drawn pictures concerning these blind men; and they are worth looking at. The first of the four we may call, if you please, The Blind Beggars by the Roadside.

The time is a few days before Easter. The place is down in the torrid Jordan Valley, some hundreds of feet lower than the ocean level. On the uplands the crops of grain are still green, but there in the valley they are yellowing for the harvest. Jesus and a group of His disciples, with other casual followers, tramp leisurely between the yellowing fields. Before them is the luxuriant and luxurious city, for Jericho was at that time both luxuriant and luxurious. Herod had a winter palace there. When the wealthy citizen of Jerusalem desired relief from the rigors of his relatively mild winter, he found his Florida down in that wonderful valley, scarce a

day's walk from his home. One more item completes the picture. There by the roadside are two dark-brown lumps, two blind beggars sitting there as their kind still do in Syria, each covered with that coarse, dark, outer garment, which served them both as a shelter by day, alike from the sun and the rain, and as covering at night when they slept. They are asleep, perhaps; at all events, they are motionless.

We are interested to look beneath one of those dark cloaks. Whatever may have been true of his companion, Bartimæus was, according to the accounts, a man of intelligence and well informed. For three years past he had heard much concerning Jesus, whose mission had so aroused the whole country; and he had formed his opinions concerning Jesus. Others were in doubt, but the blind man had thought things through, and was not in doubt. The narrative says that when they told him that the passer-by was Jesus of Nazareth, he cried out not "Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me," but "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy"; "Lord, have mercy"; "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." He had been thinking, and had reached conclusions. He held the opinion that Jesus was the promised son of David, and was Lord, and Rabboni.

It does not appear that this intelligent, well-informed man had faith. Jesus had been near Jericho for weeks, and any day, appar-

ently, Bartimæus might have procured some one to lead him to the Master's presence that he might ask for healing, and he had not done it. The world is full of the spiritually blind who prefer not to see, or who at least will not take the trouble to obtain sight for the asking. In the circumstances Bartimæus was responsible for being blind, and so are hosts of others.

The men who were around Jesus, conversing about their day's excursion and about the things of the kingdom, were, some of them, men who had often witnessed healings by Him. Some of them had doubtless themselves been healed by Him. One would think that they might have called His attention to the blind men, or the attention of the blind men to Him; but apparently they did not until the blind men began to shout. I am surprized at their heartless indifference, and I become indignant over it, until I consider how common just such indifference is in spiritual affairs. The more we think of it the more astonishing it is—the carelessness toward those who need healing on the part of those who have experienced the divine power to heal.

Have we looked at this first picture till we see its significance—the imposing, opulent city, the road to it through the yellow grainfields in the hot, fertile valley, Jesus and His followers talking among themselves as they return from the day's excursion, the two

brown lumps by the wayside? Then let the picture dissolve, and another take its place

Call this second picture The Outcry on the Street. One of the brown lumps has been recalled to animation by the noise of those passing. He has raised his head and asked who it is that is going by. He has received the reply that it is Jesus of Nazareth. Then, suddenly, what he has long known concerning Jesus has become real to him. Jesus of Nazareth! Why, He is the great healer. He gives sight to the blind; why not to me? He can not tell whether Jesus is in the front of the crowd, or in the midst of it, or in the rear; but he is afraid that Jesus may get beyond the reach of his voice. So he cries out. It is no gentle, polite request, but an outcry. His companion joins him. The disciples rebuke them. Their howling is not polite to the Master, and must be stopt. The beggars persist. The agony of an awakened desire for sight is upon them, and will not be silenced. The result is a tumult on the public highway.

In this case, and in the analogous cases that arise, observe how apt indifference is to degenerate into opposition. These followers of the Master, who ought to have been interested in the blind men and were not interested, are now actually opposing the blind men's efforts to obtain help from Jesus. Indifference is a dangerous thing, both in itself and in its possible transformations.

But really, were not the disciples right in trying to silence the outcry on the public road? And in times of religious excitement, or when unusual religious methods are used, are not the men correct who object to everything which violates the ordinary proprieties of life? It was not to the credit of Jesus to have men yelling after him publicly. It was annoying. It might bring the police. Should not religious activities be always in the strictest sense orderly?

Well, if the blind men had been so reasonable as to go to find Jesus, in order to be healed, there would have been no outcry. There need have been none if the disciples had been as thoughtful as they ought, in bringing Jesus and the blind men together. If the men and women who need spiritual help were so reasonable as always to seek the help they need, or if Christ's disciples were perpetually faithful in carrying help to those who need it, then there would be no occasion for the efforts that operate by sensation and shock. But better, immensely better, even the tumult on the street than that the blind should utterly fail to come into contact with the Healer.

This picture dissolves in its turn, and a third takes its place: The Blind Man Springing to his Feet. This picture the King James translators failed to see; but it appears in the revised versions, in Mark, in the words:

"And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus."

It is commonly believed that in cases of chronic blindness the other senses are quickened, so that there is partial compensation for the loss of sight. In the midst of the tangle of noises, the persistent outcry and the efforts to stop it, the quick ear of the blind man caught the sound of an arrested footfall, and he said to himself, I wonder if that is the footfall of the Master. Other footsteps also ceased, and he said to himself, Yes, that must be He; the others stop when He stops. Then through the sudden silence he hears the words, "Call ye him," and he says again to himself, That must be the wonderful voice of Jesus. At once those who have been rebuking him for crying out change their tone, and say: "Be of good cheer; rise, he calleth thee." The blind man is sure that the arrested footfall and the voice are those of the Master. He springs to his feet, throwing off in the act that brown outer garment of his, and bends forward, staggering, through the darkness, in the direction of the voice he has heard.

This is the third picture—Bartimæus springing up from beside his companion, throwing off his outer garment, and eagerly stepping toward the Jesus whom he can not see. It is the most important of the four pictures. The artists who wrote the Gospels accent it by additional lines.

They say that Jesus "stood still." He did not go one step farther away from the poor soul that felt its need of him. That is the way with our blesséd Redeemer.

Matthew says that Jesus called the blind men; according to Mark and Luke, He did this by having His disciples do the calling. He was not dependent on them for this help. He could have healed the men where they were. He could have gone to them. He could have drawn them to Himself by some occult power. But He prefers to work through His disciples. He wants to honor His disciples by taking them into partnership. He prefers that we have our share in His mighty deeds.

When the disciples heard the voice of the command of Jesus, those who had at first been indifferent, and had afterward been opposed, were affected by a change. They took up the invitation and extended it. What a typical case this was. How often it is repeated in the case of disciples awakened by hearing the voice of the Lord.

But such things as these are background helping to set forth in relief the figure of the blind man. Note his eagerness. He does not rise with caution, as becomes a blind man; he springs up. Away goes the brown cloak. Ordinarily he would have been very careful of that. Very likely it was the most valuable property he had. Besides, it was his best

friend. It had protected him from storms, and kept him warm at night, and endeared itself to him by a thousand associations. But he gives no attention to it now. He does not keep it on him, for it might impede his movements. He does not wait to fold it and smooth it and lay it over his arm. In his eagerness he frees his arms from it, and lets it fall away from him, as he leans forward into what is to him utter darkness, toward where he thinks that Jesus is.

Of course, the fourth picture is that of The Act of Healing. Willing hands guide the groping blind men to where the Savior stands. In a moment Bartimæus hears again the sweet voice of Jesus, now close to his ear, saying: "What will ye that I should do unto you?" Who can doubt that at these words the blind men took some lowly posture, with sightless hopeful faces turned upward? They make their reply, asking that their "eyes may be opened." In another instant Bartimæus feels a touch upon his eyelids, and once more hears Jesus speaking: "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." "And straightway" he found himself looking up into the face of the Lord who had given him his sight. As Jesus looks into his face He sees that the glad expression there indicates devotion as well as gratitude; and Jesus does not need to be told that here is one more follower who will be true even unto death. This is the

fourth picture, this and with it the eager throng of people who join with the blind men in giving praise to God.

Have these pictures any message for us modern men and women?

In this, as often in His miracles, Jesus is represented as saying to the beneficiary, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." There is scarcely an aspect of faith, either as an experience or as a doctrine, which might not be illustrated by the details given in these accounts. Let us notice how they illustrate just one aspect of faith. In the circumstances was the faith of Bartimæus, as depicted in the record, a reasonable faith?

It was a faith preceded by knowledge. As we have already seen, Bartimæus had received information concerning Jesus, and had thought it over, and had formed opinions. But these opinions were not of the nature of faith. We human persons hold a good many opinions which we suffer to lie packed away in our mental storerooms, never using them as a part of our practical stock in trade. So far as appears, the first stirrings of faith in Bartimæus began when he suddenly became aware that Jesus was present. His crying out for mercy was the fruit of his faith. What had till then been an opinion in his mind now took on a new moral character; it became faith. How strong it was as faith we have no means of knowing. How large a degree of expect-

ancy there was in it we can not tell. But what had thus far been mere knowledge now exprest itself in the form of emotion, and will, and self-committal. The blind man was seized with a longing for sight; he has long held the opinion that he might obtain sight from Jesus; heretofore the opinion has been negative, but now it becomes positive; it leads him to do something. He calls out, "Son of David, have compassion on me."

In his case the development of faith was rapid. When he heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Call ye him," his faith became an imperative call to action. Faith took possession of him then. He sprang to his feet, threw off his cloak, and rushed gropingly toward the Jesus whom he could not see. Was this reasonable conduct on his part? Faith is reasonable when it is reasonably grounded in evidence; was his faith so grounded?

He had very much less evidence than he supposably might have had. He had, for example, less evidence than the persons around him had. They could see, and he could not. And even if he could have seen, how should he know Jesus the healer, he having never met Him before? How should he know but that these persons who said it was Jesus were fooling, or were mistaken? In the circumstances, would it not have been wise for him to have been more cautious? Ought he not to have been more reticent? Should he not,

at least, have waited, taking time to test the evidence?

At once we see that his case was like that of many intelligent persons in the skeptical age in which we live. The religion of Christ makes its claims upon them for present, eager, whole-hearted discipleship. But they have less evidence of the validity of these claims than they might supposably have. They have not had experiences like those of some religious people. Their education has been such that their minds are alive to the difficulties that have beset thought from the time when men first began to think. They are conscious of needing what Christianity professes to be able to offer; but in the circumstances, is it reasonable for them to accept the offer? Is it not wiser to let the present opportunity pass, and take time to resolve doubts, and accumulate data?

If in any case the existing data are actually insufficient to justify a decision, that case may stand by itself. In the case of Bartimæus and of many others, the data are not really insufficient. Bartimæus could have imagined evidence very much more extended and convincing than that which he possest; but the evidence which he possest was sufficient to justify action. He would have been unreasonable if he had not acted. He would have been unreasonable if he had not acted promptly and eagerly. Once aware of the

opportunity, it would have been foolish for him to let the opportunity pass. In cases of conduct the question is not whether the evidence is technically complete, but whether it is practically adequate. The question is not whether the evidence before me includes all imaginable data; it is not whether I possess more or less evidence than some other person possesses; it is whether the case as it stands justifies my acting. The case as it stood justified Bartimæus in the eager decision he made, and the case as it stands would justify many a hesitating person in making an eager and firm decision in favor of the claims of Christ upon him.

When Bartimæus made his decision, the evidence at once began to accumulate. Fuller proof came with obedience, and his faith grew strong by exercise. Whatever reason he had for doubt vanished as they guided him to the presence of Jesus, and he heard the voice of Jesus close to his ear, and felt the touch of Jesus, and then looked up with seeing eyes into the eyes of his Benefactor. There was no further room for doubt then.

No; Bartimæus springing forward into the dark is a type of conduct that is not unreasonable. It was wise for him to act when he found the evidence sufficient, no matter how incomplete. Taking action then, reenforcements came in for the evidence, making for its completeness; if he had not acted, he

would have missed these reenforcements. And there have been millions who have come out for Christ, in spite of hindering doubts and difficulties, whose experience has been like that of Bartimæus. The reenforcements have not perhaps come in so rapidly as in his case. With them the triumphs of faith over doubt have required more time. But the triumphs have come. They have found by experience that Jesus taught no false pedagogy when He said: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

BENNETT

THE INSPIRED WORD

WILLIAM HENRY BENNETT

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THE INSPIRED WORD

Prof. W. H. Bennett, D.D., Litt.D.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."—Psalm 119 : 105.

When this verse was written "thy word," the Word of God, was not meant to describe the Bible. Indeed, it could not mean the Bible, because the Bible did not then exist. The Psalmist possest part of the Old Testament, but only part; he knew nothing of the most precious portion of the Scriptures, the New Testament.

Moreover, the Bible tells us often, plainly, and with great emphasis that the Word of God is something much beyond and above the written records of Revelation, something far too wonderful, vast and manifold to be contained in a small collection of books. God speaks to us through nature; that is a part of His Word. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made." "He sendeth out his commandment upon earth; his word runneth very swiftly; he giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes; he casteth forth his ice like morsels. Who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word and melteth them." The Scriptures send us for instruction to the ant and

the lilies of the field. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

There is a word of God in handicraft, in literature, in music and in art. We are told that the Lord filled the artizans who wrought the furniture of the tabernacle with the Spirit of God that they might work skilfully in gold and silver and carpenter's work and mason's work. Isaiah tells us that the intelligence and knowledge by which the farmer knows how to plow and thrash and grind come from the Lord of Hosts. There may be inspired masons and carpenters and farmers, as well as inspired preachers.

There was a word of God before the Bible and after the Bible. The Word of God came to patriarchs and prophets long before there were any written Scriptures; the Word of God was uttered by Jesus and His apostles long before there was any New Testament. Nor did God become dumb when the last sentence of the Bible was finished. There is a word of God spoken to us to-day by living lips, and written for us by the pens of living men.

There is a word of God spoken to our hearts, the whisper of conscience, the prompting to repentance, the arousing of faith, the kindling of enthusiasm. Herein God speaks to us.

Again, in the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse, our Lord Himself is spoken of as "the

Word," and "the Word of God," and Christ as "all and in all."

Therefore, the Word of God, the utterances of the Infinite and Eternal, can not be limited to the contents of a single volume. We are told concerning the earthly life of our Lord that if a record had been made of all His words and deeds, the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. How much less can one book record every word of God, all that God utters through endless ages by countless voices.

Nevertheless, we may rightly apply our text to the Bible; it is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. Practically, the Bible is the Word of God for most of us in a very special sense; it is the Word of God of which we are most sure and with which we are most familiar; it is by the Bible that we test, interpret, and recognize the Word of God when it comes to us in other ways. But it is also true that it is only by the living Word, the spirit of Christ in our hearts, that we can understand and profit by the written Word, the Scriptures.

It should not be necessary to praise the Bible; we acknowledge our debt for what it has taught us of the way of salvation, but to praise the Bible seems impertinent; it is like paying compliments to God. Apart from any doctrine of inspiration, the Bible can hold its own by its power and worth.

When we remember the teaching which the Bible records, and the teaching which it has inspired, the characters of noble men which it depicts, and the characters of the men whom it has shaped and molded, the history which the Bible records, the place it fills in history and the history it has made—when we remember these things, it seems monstrous and incredible that any one should doubt that this book, above all others, is the volume we should read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.

If only men will read and study the Bible in a docile, humble and reasonable spirit, we can safely leave the Bible to take care of itself. It is not for the most part the contents of the sacred Scriptures which try our faith; difficulties and stumbling-blocks arise chiefly from doctrines which have been taught about the Bible.

Let us consider some difficulties connected with the Bible and what is the practical meaning and proof of inspiration.

The difficulties of which I wish to speak are three, and concern (a) the authorship of the books; (b) the historicity of the narratives; (c) the moral and spiritual teaching.

It used to be supposed that we knew for certain who wrote most of the books of the Bible. The names we use as titles, Joshua, Isaiah, John, Peter, etc., were believed to be the names of the authors of these books; and this belief was supposed to rest on conclusive

evidence. The distinguished position of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles was supposed to prove that they were inspired. A book belonged to the Word of God because it was written by Moses or Isaiah or John.

All these suppositions are now challenged, even by many devout and earnest Christians. We are told that much of the Pentateuch was not written by Moses; that much of the book of Isaiah was not written by Isaiah; we are uncertain about the authorship of other books.

This, then, is the difficulty: if we believed a passage to be inspired because it was written by Moses or John, can we still find help and comfort from it if we are uncertain as to its authorship?

As to the historicity of the narratives, it would be easy and convenient if we could be sure that every story in the Bible was a perfectly accurate account of something that actually happened to the people of whom it is told. But now Christians are not agreed on this matter. There are many stories or parts of stories which are said to be parables or allegories or symbolic narratives, or in other ways not history. "Did God," we are asked, "really build up Eve out of a rib taken from Adam's side? Did the great fish really swallow Jonah?"

Then as to the moral and spiritual teaching, the difficulty here is that there are commands in parts of the Bible which Christians do not

feel to be binding on them; there is teaching which does not seem to be according to the mind of Christ. For instance, we are told that God commanded Joshua to massacre the Canaanites, men, women and children.

Now these three difficulties are real and permanent. In a sense, we can not hope to get rid of them. Humanly speaking, we shall never know who wrote much of the Bible; we shall never prove conclusively that every story is an accurate account of a real event; or that every piece of teaching is divine.

But again, these difficulties are not new; they have existed ever since there was a Bible or a part of a Bible. The Christian Church grew up in the face of them, and has continued and flourished in spite of them. For very many centuries no one has known who wrote Kings or Chronicles, or many of the Psalms, or the Epistle to the Hebrews; and yet they have been used as parts of the Bible. Men have always been a little uncertain as to where history ended and parable began. And as to teaching, have we not always been told that much of the Old Testament must be corrected by the teaching of Christ? Did not our Lord Himself say of some of the teaching of the Hebrew scriptures, "It was said unto you by them of old time, . . . but I say unto you"—something quite different. Our difficulties are old troubles on a larger scale.

Let us look at this question of authorship. This need not distress us. Men thought that a book was divine because Moses wrote it. But why? Why should a book be divine because Moses wrote it? How could you prove that to any one who challenged the proposition? If we could be sure that Moses wrote every word of the Pentateuch, we might get rid of one difficulty, but we should be plunged into many others. How did he come to write the account of his own death and burial, with laudatory notices of his work and character?

God was not obliged to speak by distinguished men whose names are remembered; He was just as well able to speak by obscure men whose names have been forgotten. If the Church has found inspiration for centuries in anonymous books, like Job, Kings, many Psalms, and Hebrews, we can still profit by other books, even if we do not know who wrote them. This difficulty is only slight and trivial.

In considering the historicity of the narratives, we have, I am afraid, to admit that many of the stories may not be accurate accounts of actual events; and that others may not be absolutely accurate, tho they may be substantially correct. But an intelligent consideration of the nature and purpose of the Bible enables us to meet this difficulty.

The special object of the Bible is to save men's souls, not to provide them with facts

about ancient history. The stories are told, in the first place and above all else, to move us to righteousness, faith and love. Are we not more easily moved in that way by parables and poetry than by scientifically accurate treatises on systematic theology? Our Lord taught in parables, and with that great example before us, we can believe that in other Biblical narratives God teaches us by parables.

The men and women of the Bible are set before us by way of example and warning; and the accounts of them are still examples and warnings, even if they are not absolutely accurate in every detail. "Pilgrim's Progress" instructs and edifies us, and is a means of grace, tho it is not history at all. It has done more for the spiritual life than scores of biographies of eminent divines.

Up to a certain point, therefore, we need not ask whether the narratives are history or not. As in the Bible, as inspired, they are not intended to fill our minds with facts, but to incline our conscience and wills to righteousness; to draw our souls to God; to make us good, kind, loving, just, trustful and devout.

But you may say that some of these stories will not help you in your religious life unless they are correct accounts of what actually happened. True, and here the Bible provides what you ask for. There is much genuine

history in the Bible, enough to provide for the practical needs of our faith. The great facts of the history of Israel, of the life of Christ, of the foundations of the Church, are clearly established by historical narratives. These are like other history, and their meaning and truth can be known by the same scientific methods as those of other history. They can be proved to the satisfaction of any intelligent, impartial inquirer, and not only to that of Christians holding a special theory of inspiration. Ordinary history, however genuine, serious and honest, is never accurate in every detail, and yet it satisfies practical needs. So the history given in the Bible suffices for our spiritual needs, even when it is not accurate in every detail. What difference, for instance, does it make to our knowledge of Christ as a Savior whether the names of the twelve apostles are given correctly? If the great purpose of the Bible is to provide for our religious life, should we expect God to work a series of miracles in order that you and I may know exactly how to spell the names of the apostles? The gospels are the impressions and recollections which men had of the Master whom they loved and trusted; and a man's impression and memory of his Teacher, Friend and Savior is far truer and better than a collection of photographs, shorthand writers' notes, and phonographic records. A statesman, for example, has made a

great speech; a friend who heard it may give you a better idea of it in five minutes than you would get from a word-for-word report. Your friend's account may be less accurate in detail, and yet it will be much more true. A photograph is correct in detail, it gives line for line, shade for shade; yet a pen-and-ink sketch by a great artist will give you a much truer portrait, tho not one line may be exactly accurate.

To sum up on this point, we admit that many of the Bible narratives are not accurate history, but they are none the less true. Some are parables or allegories, true because true to human nature and divine wisdom; true as "Pilgrim's Progress" is true, and as our Lord's parables are true. Others are true as any history is true; true in substance as to their leading facts; true in impression and teaching. These narratives, such as they are, have been given by God as a means of grace, and experience has shown their value.

Our third difficulty is that we find teaching recorded in the Bible which does not seem to be morally and spiritually perfect, judged by the standard of Christ. I lay stress on the word "recorded"; there is much recorded in the Bible which is not put forth as a perfect utterance of divine revelation. An author may record views which he does not indorse; and if, without irreverence and speaking very loosely, we may call God the author of the

Bible, we may say that in many passages He has recorded the faith of ancient times merely for our instruction, without indorsing it. One great use of the Scriptures is to give us the history of revelation, to tell us how, step by step, God made Himself known, and how men understood or misunderstood the revelation. Therefore, the Bible preserves for us forms of belief which were imperfect. The book of Job spends several pages in recording the views of Job and his friends, and then at the end God repudiates much that is thus recorded. He tells the friends, "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly, for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath." The New Testament tells us clearly, expressly and emphatically that the Old Testament was not a perfect revelation, but needed to be interpreted, corrected and supplemented by the teaching of Christ.

Again, much of the Bible is addrest to some individual or group of individuals, to Israel, or to some church or society; we may say that some passage exprest God's will and mind to a particular society or individual at a particular time, and that the words were true to them as they were understood by them. But we can not be sure that the natural sense of the words in the English version as we should understand them will be true for us.

Ideas need to be translated as well as words. The same words mean different things to different people; and no verse of the Old Testament ever meant quite the same to an ancient Israelite as it does to us.

This third difficulty appears in its most startling form in words said to have been spoken by God Himself. Sometimes we seem to feel that there is something un-Christian, so to speak, in commands which God is said to have given. Yet our previous answers apply here also; we are not bound to believe that every statement is exact history; and we may also consider that these are cases where we have the record of the imperfect human understanding of the perfect mind and will of God. We have seen that it is said that God commanded Joshua to massacre the Canaanites, men, women and children. But as a matter of strict history, we have no real proof that Joshua ever received such a command. The passages which refer to this were written centuries after the time of Joshua, and are a symbolic expression of the Israelitish sense of the wickedness of the heathen.

Again, summing up: If you find anything in the Bible which offends your moral and spiritual feeling, you may often conclude that you do not properly understand it; that a full knowledge of the circumstances under which the words were spoken, of the people to whom they were addrest, and of the original mean-

ing of the words themselves, would remove your difficulties.

Thus I have tried to explain why, if we believe the Bible to be inspired, our faith need not be shaken by uncertainty about authorship, or the historicity of narratives, or the character of some portions of the teaching.

Let us now ask what is the practical meaning and proof of inspiration!

I say "practical" because I do not try to give an adequate and exact statement of the doctrine of inspiration, according to scientific dogmatics; I only attempt to explain its bearing on the religious life of men in general; to state some plain truths we can all understand and apply.

I may illustrate what is meant by the inspiration of the Bible by quoting a favorite remark of a former teacher of mine. If any one wanted to know how he took a passage of Scripture, he would reply, "I don't take the verse, the verse takes me."

That is the point about inspiration; it is not a question of how we understand the Bible, of our views on revelation; not of how we take the Bible, but of how the Bible takes us. Among the many things which may be said about inspiration, this is the most important: when we say that the Bible is inspired, we mean that if we give it a fair chance it will influence and control our lives.

It is inspired because it rouses our sense of

duty; it makes us patient, sympathetic and forgiving; it prompts us to comfort the sufferer, to protect the weak, to supply the wants of the needy; it quickens our conscience, convinces us of sin, humbles us before God, and makes us feel our need of forgiveness; and yet again, it inspires us with faith in the divine love and leads us to the cross of Christ.

Naturally, if a man does not desire such blessings, and is determined that the Bible shall not influence him, he may not find in it this power. But if any one honestly seeks for guidance and help, "he that seeketh, findeth."

In saying what inspiration means, we have also shown how we may know that the Bible is inspired. Such a question answers itself. It is like asking, How am I to know that the sun gives light and heat? I see and feel them.

How do I know that the Gospels are inspired? Because I feel that in them I meet with a perfect life which makes me ashamed of myself and desirous of doing better; because the story of that life makes me feel that God has drawn near to man to help and save him.

How do I know that the one hundred and third Psalm is inspired? Because I feel that in it a man speaks to me from his inmost soul, from a real experience of God, and he helps me to believe that God is near to me to save and bless. And so for other passages.

There are, of course, parts of the Bible where this practical proof will not apply, or may not work for everybody. But take the book as a whole, make yourself familiar with the passages that are most helpful to you, and you will not doubt the presence and reality of inspiration.

Do not trouble just now about what does not appeal to you. There are spots in the sun, but we do not deny ourselves its light and warmth; we do not shut ourselves in some dark, underground cellar till we have solved the mystery of the sun-spots and found out their use. We need not deny ourselves the grace of the Scriptures till we have solved the mystery of their difficult passages. It might perhaps be possible to construct some instrument to hide all the rest of the sun, so as only to see the spots, and people who saw the sun only through this instrument might say that it was all dark. Some people look at the Bible in that way. But the spots on the sun do not destroy its reputation as a source of light and heat; nor yet is it necessary to deny that there are less luminous and helpful parts of the Bible in order to believe in its inspiration.

The proof of inspiration rests on a foundation that is broad, strong and deep. It is not a mere matter of private judgment. There is a great cloud of witnesses. For century after century countless myriads of many

races, nations and languages have found peace, life and salvation through the Bible. If human testimony can prove anything, it proves that the Bible is a Word of God to man.

Finally, the more reasonable views of modern times have made the influence of the Bible more sure and wide and strong. Herein, as in many other of God's gifts to our generation, we have to thank Him—

> For quickened zeal in holy toil,
> For love more wide and tender;
> For broader light on God's great ways,
> For larger hope, for purer praise,
> For fuller self-surrender.

BENTON

THE FACT, ETERNITY AND CHARACTER OF GOD

GUY POTTER BENTON

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THE FACT, ETERNITY AND CHARACTER OF GOD

Pres. Guy Potter Benton, D.D., LL.D.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."—Rev. 4 : 8.

There is longing in the heart of man for a God. Men are wont to boast of their physical strength, of their military valor. Men are consciously proud of their intellectual achievements, of their mental grasp. Yet tho a man have the iron muscle of a Sandow, tho he return from his country's battlefields honored with the highest titles a brave soldier can bear, tho he outshine in brilliancy of intellect a Demosthenes or a Cicero, tho he be recognized by the student world to be among the profoundest philosophers of all the ages, yea, even tho one man seem symmetrical in perfection of physique and intellect, yet that man, in all the fulness of his powers, in moments of solitude, away from the profusion of men's praises, away from the intoxicating din of popular applause, will stretch his hands upward with yearning grasp for some unseen superior being whom he himself can reverence and adore. With all his attainments there is an inward craving for some higher personality, in whom he can confide, into

whose sympathetic ear he can pour the trials and cares of his life.

Humble or exalted in station, savage or civilized, illiterate or cultured, man, made in the image of God, from the cradle to the grave, in the pure innocence of childhood, in the midst of daily toil, when men render proud homage at his feet, as he wanders through the lonely forest or over the trackless plains, in his superstitious ignorance or in his polished erudition, has an ever-present longing in his heart to learn, to know of his divine pattern. Every man longs to ascertain the origin of his existence, to know his Creator.

Desire to worship is inherent in human kind, and those who profess to believe in a creation of chance are few and usually insincere. Many people are honestly skeptical but few are honestly atheistic. Many sincere men question the positive statements made by the disciples of various religious systems, but few deny the existence of some unseen, unknown higher creative power. The Darwinian theory, formerly regarded as an entirely wicked atheism, has, in late years, come to be tolerated and in some cases discipled by those adhering to orthodox creeds; but after all, at its best, the doctrine of Christian evolution is only a speculative philosophy with many missing links. The very fact that, in embryo, the unborn child passes through what, by long stretches of imagination, seem to some to

be the various stages of tadpole, of frog, of mouse, of ape, and the further fact that the new-born child, animal like, clings to a stick of wood or extended fingers, leads only to an assumption, and the conclusion never can become definite until some antiquarian or anthropologist finds in the hidden recesses of the earth, in some hitherto undiscovered cavern, a fully grown, fully developed biped that, once of a lower order, has at some time, by some mark that can not be questioned, become transferred to the existence of the higher order, man; or until some historian, seeking after truth, finds authentic record of the fact that man is an outgrowth of some lower order of animal existence. But then, even tho all the missing links in this weak chain should be gathered up, the question will naturally arise as to why this growth into higher orders of existence has ceased? Why is not a better and nobler creation evolved from imperfect man? And with these questions unanswered, the doctrine of Christian evolution can never be accepted by those who seek secure foundation for their belief.

Granting, however, for the sake of argument, that the doctrine of evolution is true, the acceptance of this belief does not necessarily place the believer in it among those who deny the existence of a higher creative power. Indeed, many of our latter-day evo-

lutionists are devout religionists. Because man may have come into the world as an outgrowth of a lower order of life beginning with the simple cell, this fact, if it be a fact, does not disprove a Creator, for even a cell could not have been evolved out of nothingness. Then, too, animal life is only a small part of the universe; and when we have explained the origin of life, the solid rocks, the everlasting hills, and the limitless firmament cry aloud and puncture all man-made theories by demanding to know "Whence came we?" A thousand objects in the natural world prompt the question of origin.

The little child in its mother's arms, with blinking eye wonders at the great ball of fire that beams down upon it from the vaulted blue above, and when the shadows of night fall about the little one, he looks out through the window-pane and claps his tiny hands in ecstasy of delight at the myriad stars that, like glittering diamonds, bespangle the curtain of the night. The heathen in mountain-bordered Tibet, amid the tangled jungles of the Kongo, or wherever he wanders in intellectual gloom or spiritual darkness, lifts his eyes up toward the heavens, and, like the little child, asks Whence? Where?

The learned astronomer, as he points his telescope upward, beholds the great solar systems and begins his computations. "Here," he says, "is the earth with a diameter of

7,918 miles; yonder, 240,000 miles away, is the earth's only satellite, the moon, king of night, with its eternal ice-bound mountains; farther away still are the major planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and the asteroids; and there are the minor planets; and there away out above and beyond all, 92,500,000 miles from earth, with a diameter of 860,000 miles, is the sun, grand center of this system, rotating on its axis once every twenty-five days, around which all the planets circle in their orbits like the retinue of a king." And yet after all his study, the astronomer with broader views and greater knowledge and larger conceptions, must descend to the level of the little child and the unlettered heathen, and marvel that so great things have existed through the endless ages, and that they continue to exist without the loss of a single revolution.

Again, as child, as pagan, as man behold the flower-carpeted valleys, the forest-clad hills, the watered pastures, the whole blending into one great nature-picture such as never dropt from the brush of the greatest artist, they lift their eyes upward, and, looking out into infinite space, cry aloud once more, Whence? Where?

Then turning the mind to the living, breathing, moving organisms that mark and distinguish the animal world, observing the achievements of the highest representative of

the class, man—noting the perfect mechanism of his being, and remembering that in helpless infancy he enters the world and that often in the twinkling of an eye, and always in utter helplessness to resist, he is removed from the stage of human activity, again is forced the solemn question, Whence? Where?

Then appreciative of human weakness and physical mortality, there exists in the soul of every man, heathen or civilized, a longing after some higher power, some superior being, some one faultless, some one immortal. After twilight shadows have fallen, in hours of accustomed rest, night-dreams of life after death disturb the slumbers; and in sunlit hours of thoughtful meditation, day visions of a hoped-for eternal home beyond the grave flit before the yearning imagination. All these: the existence of world within world, the star-draped firmament, the wide expanse of blue ocean, the verdure-drest earth, the springing plant, the bursting bud, the blossoming tree, the golden fruitage of autumn, the miracle of animal life, the majesty and mortality of man, the longing for an eternal home, the desire to know a Creator, and the inclination to worship lead to one indisputable conclusion, namely, that somehow, somewhere there is a God.

The search after the real God has occupied the time and employed the mind of mankind from the earliest history of the human race

to the present. Savage people have worshiped the sun as the grand center of all existence, and look forward to a roving life of undisturbed pleasure after death in the happy hunting-grounds. The superstitious Siamese pamper, adore, worship the white elephant as divine. Civilized nations have struggled and studied to find the true God and the key to immortality, and many profess to have found both. The unity of God was the central doctrine of the old Egyptian belief, and they gave to this supreme being the very same name by which He was known to the Hebrews, "*Nuk Pu Nuk*," "I am that I am." Animal worship was also a part of their religious system, and the mummies of their sacred bulls were sepultured in magnificent sarcophagi.

The Zend-Avesta was the sacred book of ancient Persia, but Zoroastrianism taught a system of belief known as dualism.

Brahmanism is a religion of caste that has passed through various modifications, but still teaches that conscious existence is always evil, and encourages bodily torture in order to extinguish self, so that the soul may be reabsorbed into that indefinable something in the elements they call Brahma.

Buddhism still follows the teaching of its founder, Buddha, and, while this system condemns the severe penances of the Brahmans, yet it commends poverty and retirement from active life as the best means of getting rid of

desire and attaining Nirvana; that is, the repose of unconsciousness.

Confucianism is a religion opposed to material progress, and the nine classics of Confucius sum up the teachings of the faith in the one injunction, "Walk in the trodden paths."

Mohammedanism teaches that there is one God and that Mohammed was his true prophet. It is a sanguinary religion, and its bloodthirsty adherents believe that dying on the battle-field they are immediately translated to eternal paradise.

The ancient Britons held dim faith in an overruling power and in a life beyond the grave. The priestly Druids offered sacrifices to the one, and buried the warrior's spear with him that he might be provided with the other. Druidism led its bearded priesthood to a home in the depths of the forest amid the revered oaks and with the venerated mistletoe.

But all these religions have failed to satisfy the longings of the human heart, and while many followers of each have held on with attempted earnestness of belief because of superstitious ignorance, and lack of knowledge of a better substitute, yet death has had a horror for the disciples of all these because all were man-made, all were human products. There is but one true God, and that is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the

God of the Hebrews, who now, with Son and Spirit coequal, reigns supreme and shall continue to reign forever and forever. He is the One who was, and is, and is to come. We are led to this conclusion by every possible infallible proof. Our God is no man-made product, for He was made before anything was made that was made. He spoke first, not through the mouth of man, but from His own eternal throne in the heavens His voice sounded the command, "Let there be light, and there was light." The confused elements knew their Master's voice and separated in obedience thereto. Whether the six days of Creation were of twenty-four hours' duration, as now, or whether each day represents the cycle of a hundred years or the period of a thousand twelvemonths, we do not know. But this we do know, that all the scientific research of the most distinguished scholars verifies the order of Creation exactly as detailed in the Bible.

God met Moses face to face, and on Sinai's slope gave him the Decalog written with His own finger. He spoke to him in audible voice from the burning bush. He thundered His commands from the clouds so that the hosts of the children of promise at the mountain's base heard with their own ears and understood.

He gave to the world a Son, whose divinity some doubt, but whose perfection of life and

character none have ever questioned. Some may scoff at His claims and speak slightingly of Him as only a Jewish peasant, or a Galilean vagabond, but all admit that His life is the only spotless one known to the records of time. This Son ascended into heaven, but the promised Comforter came, and thousands are able to-day to bear testimony to those who have not yet taken this Son to be the mainspring of thought and action, that the Comforter has come and that His Spirit bears witness incontrovertible with theirs that they are saved.

Every natural law is in harmony with God's law, and while the sun did stand still and the waves obeyed His voice, these were miracles that proved God the master of matter in His own universe.

All the discoveries of the antiquarian—all the research of the archeologist have thus far been in substantiation of Scriptural record. Every writer of profane history has confirmed Bible history and the story of the advent of the Redeemer.

The claims of our God are reasonable, for all His hope of glory is in the world to come. The promulgators of every other religious system have imposed obedience, bodily torture, ostracism, in order to honor and enrich themselves; but our God seeks no higher honor than to be honored in the disinterested love, the pure thoughts and righteous actions of His followers on the earth. His greatness is

clothed in the garb of humanity, His power is arrayed in garments of unostentatiousness, His kingly majesty is appareled in robes of humility, His throne is absolute purity, His crown is jeweled love, His scepter is golden charity.

God is a spiritual essence penetrating all substance and all space, but He is a personal essence, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, sympathizing with our grief, rejoicing in our happiness. God is the true vine, we are the branches, continuing if we choose to live upon the same spiritual food that nourishes the parent stem, or permitting, if we will, the engraftment of Satanic sprouts that will feed upon carnalities. He is the taproot of all life. By His permission the branches start, at His command they die. God is the perfection of truth. There are no incongruities in nature, His handiwork. The discrepant exists only in art.

God is almighty. All the forces of nature are in His grasp. The apple breaks from the twig, and Almighty God, acting through gravitation, draws it downward to the earth instead of permitting it to fly sidewise or upward into space.

An atom is the smallest quantity of matter that can enter into combination, and by cohesion Almighty God holds the particles of the universe together. The breath of existence is in His nostrils, and bright-eyed, ruby-

lipped childhood, radiant youth, stalwart manhood, and tottering age are supplied with breath from God, the omnipotent life-center of the universe.

The elements obey His voice, for He sendeth the early and the latter rains and the sunshine from heaven. With famine He arouses the latent charity in the human breast and turns the hungry to acknowledgment of Himself as the Giver of all. With golden harvest and with autumn-time vintage, He makes glad the heart of man.

The circling seasons revolve in obedience to the voice divine. The desolate, verdureless, tempestuous, ice-bound winter is softened into silence by the coming of the lilac-perfumed, violet-laden spring; the blazing heat of summer sinks into the peaceful lap of fruited autumn, all because God wills.

These nature-manifestations come oftentimes, however, to be regarded lightly because they seem to obey fixed laws and are expected as a matter of course. It is only when we stop to reflect at the more than clock-like precision with which day follows night, and light fades into darkness; it is only when we turn our thoughts outward from self to flowering landscape, fertile valley and fruitful hill; it is only when we pause for a moment to rest from the mad struggle for earthly gain to contemplate God in His greatness, that we are overwhelmed by the glorious

magnitude of His power. But if, by some mighty hurricane, the rivers, lakes, and seas should be swept dry of their waters, and if, by some fearful holocaust of flame, the earth should be stript of all save man—man left alone on the world's desert waste would still be greater than all the combined beauty and strength that had been licked up by the devouring elements.

Man, wonderful in mechanism, with numerous bones, with convenient joints, with bundles of muscles, with arteries and veins fed and relieved by that great ceaselessly pulsating central organ, the heart, is the most complex machine ever created, and yet thus far described, and if this be all of man, he is only a superior-inferior animal—superior in carriage and bearing to all—inferior in power and strength to many.

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!" It is in his spiritual nature only that man is superior to beast. He is an intellectual, an emotional, a willing animal as opposed to the mere instinctive lower orders. It is this spiritual nature that makes man a positive factor for either good or evil, and it is God's transforming power working upon this spirit that manifests the greatness of God.

Man—conceived in sin, wicked by nature, slothful, idle, mischievous, lustful, malicious, disobedient, envious, dishonest, recreant, profane—this is the subject, and from the human standpoint and so far as human agencies are concerned, the condition is a hopeless one. It is at this point of man's utter helplessness, however, that God's greatness is revealed, for the inability of man to succor man, the inability of man to transform, by his own strength, his own soul, makes the miracle of redemptive power the chiefest mark of God's divinity. It is difficult to conceive of a more pitiable lot than that which characterizes this lost estate of man, and the gift of a personal Savior to a sin-sick, dying people, a Savior who was tempted like as we are, yet without sin, who should be an example of perfect life to men and women all down through the ages, a Savior who in leaving the world gave promise of a second coming, a Savior who has sent, in His physical absence, the Holy Spirit to bear witness of His constant presence—this gift of Jesus Christ to a sin-sick, dying world is God's richest benefaction to man.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, was a miracle in conception, in birth, in sonship.

Those who attempt to explain the power of God and Christ by natural law, those who attempt to solve the problem of redemption by human computation fail, and, no doubt, are

lost, because they do not rise above the human and realize that Christ was a miracle, and that Christianity is founded on a system of miracles. It is the superhuman power of God that inspires reverence and respect, for while man may love his equals, it is only his superiors he reveres. If God were human, He would be on the same level of ability with us; and Himself no greater than man, would not be entitled to man's adoration and worship.

There are some men, good men, who attempt to explain God and His power by natural laws and by asserting that God is in harmony with nature; but they do not convince —indeed, they only confirm—skepticism, for no man is able to accept God by faith until he realizes that God rises above man, who is circumscribed and limited by the forces of nature's environment, and that He is a supernatural miracle-worker. There are those who hesitate and doubtfully refuse to accept as possible the Scriptural accounts of Christ's miracles of physical healing, because such results are unexplainable by natural laws. Yet if these honest skeptics would but look beyond nature to nature's God, and realize that the miracles of physical healing performed by Christ in person were but a type of the miracles of spiritual healing to be performed in the days to come, all doubts would vanish. The miracle of soul salvation, which has been wrought out to its completeness in many of

our lives, and that is still, blest be God, being wrought out anew in other lives every day, is a greater miracle by far than that of bodily healing. To realize fully this wicked, slothful, idle, mischievous, lustful, malicious, recreant, disobedient, envious, dishonest, profane natural man, and then to grasp the fact that by one word of loving fatherly forgiveness from Christ, the Savior, to the sin-sick, repentant soul, the Spirit bearing witness with man's spirit that he is redeemed, that darkness has become instant light, that impurity is supplanted by purity, that eternal death has given way to immortal life, is to realize that Christ, by the office of the Holy Spirit, is a greater miracle-worker in the early morning hours of the twentieth century than He was when He healed the paralytics and lepers in Galilee.

Resurrection power is in God's hands. There are those who think the restoration of life to the dead body an impossibility, but these honest doubters, once more, measure God's power by the limit of human ability—they attempt an explanation on the basis of natural law, and herein they fail, for God is hyper-physical, a performer of miracles. He is above and beyond us in power, and that He is not circumscribed by human limitations is the greatest argument in proof of His divinity. Those who will not admit resurgent power because they can not find satisfactory

explanation for it by measure with human ability, must also refuse to believe many of the commonest of every-day phenomena. Refusing to believe in bodily resurrection because of inability to understand its processes, the same individual must believe that his eyes have deceived him, and that every growing plant, every budding bush, every thrifty tree he seems to see is a creature of his imagination that really has no actual, material existence, for it is only from the dry and unpromising seed buried in the earth that the flowering twig and fruitful vine have sprung. All plant life is a resurrection miracle, and God is the agent. Do you understand this? No. Do you admit it? Yes. Then do not doubt the possibility of bodily resurrection.

The caterpillar is, in appearance, a most unpromising reptile, but it dies, and, in the casket of hardened shell, its cocoon grave is wrapt about it, but the breath of God at springtime bursts the bands of death, and the humble worm of former existence flits from flower to flower with wing of dazzling beauty, sipping nectar sweetness from rose and honeysuckle, and, in its atmospheric heaven, looking down to earth, its former home, where foot of man and beast were wont to tread upon it, it testifies to the resurrection miracle. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in

glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Life is a fitful dream; happiness alternating with sorrow; hope with discouragement; assurance with trial; victory with defeat; and at last comes death. "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," death, while a rest from earthly toil and suffering, is not an eternal sleep, for if, in life, we have been faithful in pressing forward toward the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus, we shall rise again. The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, at the sound of the last trumpet, when the heavens shall be rolled back as a scroll, will ride in majesty upon the clouds of heaven, and, in obedience to the divine command, the earth and sea will give up their dead, and, in response to the Master's "Well done," the saved of earth will enter into the joy of their Lord, where in final, complete victory they will reign in celestial happiness through never-ending time.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Thus is the power of the Lord God Almighty made manifest over death and the

grave. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The sting of death is sin, and God's miracle-working power is disclosed with greater emphasis in the resurrection of the soul than in the resurrection of the body. Raising an immortal soul from the dark, loathsome charnel-house of sin is a greater marvel by far than the result nineteen centuries ago of the divine command, "Lazarus, come forth." Blest be God! By His almighty power He can raise, He does raise, from spiritual death to spiritual life. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

God is not only all powerful in the physical acceptation of the term, but He is almighty because of His holy character. He is the personal exemplification of human perfection in the body of His Son, Jesus of Galilee, who was tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

God, having made man a free moral agent, is a wooer, not a coercionist. If the knowledge of the sacrifice made for man's redemption will not win man's love, God will not apply physical force to compel acceptance, love, and obedience. A military chieftain, tho holding the lives of his soldiers in his hands, exhibits his power by refusing to exercise compulsion, and realizes that the best service rendered is prompted by love for the commander. Thus God shows His almighty power.

God again exhibits the greatness of His character in that the love He exercises for man is a disinterested love. Men oftentimes appear to esteem others because they hope thereby to profit themselves, but our Heavenly Father loves us for our sakes, not for His own.

I have endeavored to show that God is almighty; that the elements are under His control; that life and death are in His hands; that He is Master of physical and spiritual death; that He is the bestower of immortality; and, lastly, that His greatness is most prominent because of His holy character. God is eternal. He has reigned from the beginning and shall rule in loving justice through the unending ages of the future. God, His power, and eternity are not altogether comprehensible to the finite mind. If we could fully understand God He would not be infinite, divine.

The child lying at night in its little crib by its mother's side cries out because of the darkness its eyes can not penetrate, and wants to get up. The mother says, "Lie still and wait till daylight, child." And the little one asks, "When will that be?" The mother says, "It will be daylight after awhile," and, taking the tiny hand in hers, the restless child calmly drops into peaceful slumber, confident that at morning's dawn light will come. So with God's grown-up children.

Amid the impenetrable gloom of limited knowledge we grow restless and uneasy because we can not see Him face to face, but by faith, putting our hands in His, we may confidently expect that after the night of restless earthly trial He will reveal Himself in the fulness of His beauty at eternity's joyous daybreak.

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BEVAN

THE POWER AND GLORY OF CHRIST AS THE REVELATION OF GOD

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THE POWER AND GLORY OF CHRIST AS THE REVELATION OF GOD

Prin. Llewelyn D. Bevan, LL.B., D.D.

"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."—John 14 : 9.

The extraordinary character of these words can hardly be realized by us to whom they are the natural expression of a truth which lies at the foundation of our faith, and has dominated with ever-increasing power the thought of the world through all the Christian centuries. What must they have meant in the lips of Him who first uttered them, and in the ears of those to whom they were addrest! He was of Israel, and so were the little group of disciples that must have heard them with startled wonder. For ages, in the minds of the race to which these men belonged, there had been wrought the conviction of the unity of God, His spirituality and all those exalted thoughts which belonged to monotheism by which they had been separated from all other nations, and to bear testimony to which truth they had been trained as a nation, and preserved by experiences of the greatest suffering from the idolatry and materialism of all other peoples.

One of the first principles of their law was that they must never seek to present their conception of God under any material form. They had been taught that God's thoughts were not their thoughts; that high as the heavens were above the earth, so high was the Supreme Being above every condition and form of man. It was, indeed, true that God might reveal His will to men, and might use them as the instruments of His will, and as prophets who should speak the words of God, interpreting His word and declaring His purposes of righteousness or mercy. How startling, then, must the declaration have been. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

The sequel of this wonderful teaching of Jesus is no less remarkable than the occurrence of the teaching itself. The claim which Christ thus makes led to His death, the violent scattering of His disciples and the apparent destruction of all the effects of His ministry. And yet, within a few weeks of His death, these men who had heard Him speak these words began a work, the essence of which is absolute faith in what the Master said, divine adoration of His person and the proclamation of this truth as the condition of human redemption and the foundation of the kingdom of God upon the earth. From the beginning of this work it has gone on, and more and more distinctly. All the ages have more clearly endeavored to define the mean-

ing of these words; and, notwithstanding the criticism of philosophy and the opposition of secular and worldly thought, the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Father in a unity of nature altogether unique and transcendent has been and is growingly the mightiest moral and spiritual power ever manifested in the history of mankind.

The significance of these facts to a thoughtful mind can not be overestimated. They arrest the attention; they compel inquiry; they are the strongest argument for the essential truth of the doctrine. They are proved by experience to be the most powerful grounds of belief which can be presented to both reason and faith.

These words involve much more than the mere authority of Christ as a teacher. They transfer our attention from the mere doctrine and words of Jesus to His personality. He, Himself, in His work and character, becomes the manifestation of God. When we see Him, we see God. His character is God's character. We do not reason about the Supreme Being. We do not draw our conclusions from His works or His discourses, but we look verily upon God Himself. In a word, Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God in the highest form in which God can make Himself known to man's faculties of perception and apprehension.

In the first place, the power of God was

exhibited in the works of Jesus Christ. Whatever view we may take of events which are described as miraculous, they are always associated with a relationship to God as the source of their power. The human agents concerned in them were the instruments employed by God in their performance, and those who performed them or directed them are represented as in some way invoking the divine presence and power. They produce in their action the sense of human powerlessness, unless there be given some specific divine authority and aid for their occurrence. The works of Jesus, however, show no characteristic of this kind. They are directly and immediately His own. We might define the miracles of Jesus as His works done in His own way. The personality of the wonder-worker is greater than His work. He stands supreme above it. Jesus has direct and immediate control over what He does. There are, indeed, some cases in which the works of Christ are referred to as if He were a divine instrument; but these are only the instances where the spectators press their judgment of the work from their own standpoint; that is to say, they are regarding our Lord's work as they have learned to regard all miraculous events. In some cases Christ Himself uses the words which seem to place Him in the class of other miraculous agents; but if we carefully examine them we shall find that He

speaks down to the plane, so to say, of those who are around Him. The real essence of Christ's working is direct and immediate; and if He refers to the authority of God, it is only to affirm that that authority is His own, which He exercises not as dependent upon God, but as God's equal.

It is this characteristic which places Christ's work on a level with the divine relation to the material universe. The power of God in nature is everywhere direct and immediate. It works with all the facility of perfect control. Its manifestations are silent, irresistible, directly achieving the ends which are sought. Man, indeed, may be compelled by the limitation of his faculties to form conceptions of intermediate processes, means to ends, second causes, so-called laws of nature and the like. But these are only the idols of the human mind, and even scientific philosophy is beginning to recognize the presence in the universe of the one supreme universal force of which it may declare only an agnostic existence, but which further thinking recognizes as the presence of the universal and immanent God. It was thus that God, as Christ, worked. He simply took the bread and the few small fishes and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the multitude, and the slender supply is made by Him to satisfy the assembled thousands. When man can explain the multiplication of the seed into its harvest

fulness, then, too, will be explained the power of the Lord. He touches the leper and says: "I will; be thou clean." And immediately he is cleansed. What can more wonderfully illustrate those healing ministries with which the universe abounds and in relation to which human learning finds that its chief endeavor, and, indeed, its only success, is to remove those hindrances on which condition God has established the methods of doing away with the pain and disease that have invaded the world. A word of Christ stills the tempest, turns to adamant the sea upon which He walks. In this regard there is nothing more wonderful, nothing more divine than our Lord's own explanation of His death and resurrection. Even apostles assert a divine interposition when they say "God raised him from the dead." But Christ declares that no man can take His life from Him. He lays it down of Himself, and He Himself takes it again. And He does not hesitate to place Himself on an equality with God, and declares that, not only shall the dead hear a divine voice, but that His voice also will be heard by those who lie within their tombs. And of this He gives a foretaste when He calls through the portals of the grave and the man who had been dead four days comes forth, and the Master bids them loose him and let him go.

In all this have we not a supreme revelation

of God's power? There is no limitation of the sphere of its exercise. The material forces of nature, the various conditions of human life, that which sin has injured and disturbed, disease and hunger and death are only the arenas where Christ displays the infinite power of God. The spiritual world, with its awful mysteries which overawe and paralyze and destroy man's life and blessedness, are alike beneath the divine control as manifested by our Lord. The tempter has no power over Him. Sin and rebellion can not touch the divine personality, even when it has taken upon itself man's frailty and infirmity. The world of evil spirits is obedient to the will of Christ. Not only do angels wait upon Him to do His bidding, but the fallen spirits themselves are submissive to His word, and do His pleasure. As we behold thus His mighty working, we do not smite upon our breasts like the Roman officer and cry, "Verily, this was the Son of God"; neither do we, with Peter, cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But we fall submissive and adoring before the divine majesty and join our voices with those who render their ascription of praise, "For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

It is not only the works of power which are manifested as divine in Christ, but also God's goodness and beneficence. Wherever we turn in nature, we find that the divine wisdom

unites with the divine power in operations that manifest beneficence. The material world is everywhere ordered; but, as we rise in the scale of beings and ascend through the various grades of sentiency up to the highest, we are everywhere arrested by the harmony working for good, the provisions which are made to satisfy the differing orders of creation according to their need and rank. The world may not be always a scene of universal goodness, but it is the abode of goodness. And how clear did Christ make this by the character of His life and the ends He ever sought! How many events we might recall in the history of Christ, where He showed Himself as the dispenser of mercy as, in the picturesque and gracious language of the evangelist, "He went about doing good." Behold that crowd who gathered about Him at the door of the house when the sun is sinking in the west, and they brought to Him from all the region round the sick and the halt and the blind and the lame, and He sent them away healed and rejoicing. How many voices do we not hear with their piercing sorrow crying, "Have mercy," changed into psalms of exultant thankfulness! When He saw the multitudes, He had compassion. No call for pity and for help was ever disregarded. He joined in the simple pleasures of the marriage feast and saved the needy, but too generous hospitality from disappoint-

ment and shame. He turns the funeral procession into the glad return home of the life restored. Christ, in the few short months of His human career, not only everywhere exhibited the beneficence of God, but left a seed of human kindness and brotherhood which ever grows and repeats His own kindliness in the growing service of human love and thankfulness. When we look at Him, we see the Father. God is not only the mighty one who rules all things by His might, but He is the heart of the universe, and man's surmise has become assurance that it is the heart of a Father, for men have looked upon the face of Christ.

There are some events and some characteristics in the life and character of Jesus which have occasioned perplexity in many minds. For example, His words to the Syrophenician woman seem to jar upon some of those who have been drawn to the goodness of Him, whose mighty works were so beneficent. Did He not also curse the barren fig-tree? The event at Gadara, when the devils were permitted to enter the swine and drive them to destruction, has seemed to some to indicate a lack of perfect self-control on the part of Christ. These incidents seem so inconsistent with the general tenor of His life as to lead many to doubt their historical certainty. But is not this a superficial criticism? May we not find that even here we are looking upon

the Father, when we are regarding our Lord? Does not this show us a divine sovereignty, which must not be measured merely by our conceptions of power and goodness, and which, tho we may explain it in some measure by the judgment of our faculties, must yet always leave a residuum of the inexplicable, which we find when we are dealing with the things that are divine.

God is sovereign. Christ, too, was sovereign. Meek and lowly, absolutely human and brotherly tho He was, there was yet in Him a separateness which all felt, a region of dignity and supreme aloofness which not even His most intimate friends could overtake. This is so in the divine supremacy—the sovereignty of God, which even man's last efforts and most curious research can never altogether comprehend. These are the limits between man and God, which man can not overpass. And if there had not been these limits in Christ's relation to men, He would have failed to present to us fully the showing forth of God.

There are some considerations, however, which will help us to understand something of this mystery. It is not merely that the conditions which we now consider are those of suffering and distress, but they are such suffering and distress as seem to us so needless, inflicted by a malign chance, rather than by the hand of a just and beneficent God.

How unequal seems the lot of man! How do the evil escape suffering, while the good are plunged in continual pain? We do sometimes see the meaning and the issue of the ills of life. If we can not answer the ancient question, What is evil? we can at least make some reply, when it is demanded, What are the ends which evil tends to subserve? And a similar answer may be given when we turn to the work of our Lord. Did mercy seem to delay when the Syrophenician woman sought help? Was there restriction and apparent injustice in the signs of favoritism and special love? But note the result: It was only that the pain and suffering which were physical might be seen to issue in a higher faith and upon that poor heart that had been crusht with its sorrows, He pours all the fulness of His abundant blessing.

In that strange and remarkable incident of the cursing of the barren fig-tree, apparently so unlike Christ, there was a holy discipline, and there were moral lessons which have far transcended the destruction of a tree, as also in the apparently wasteful loss of the herd of swine. These are the exemplary and exceptional manifestations of the divine sovereignty, and altho this depends upon God's personal will, yet its movements are ever marked by those principles of righteousness which, tho sometimes hidden and concealed, work themselves out for the furtherance of

the kingdom and the ultimate blessing of mankind.

We ascend in the scale of the attributes as we observe in the next place how the moral righteousness of God appears in the person of our Lord. We need not dwell upon the sinlessness of Christ's personal nature. But it must be noted that sinlessness is not merely a quality attributed to Him by His admiring and adoring followers, but the Lord Himself was conscious of it, and even referred to it, thus separating Himself from all the great spiritual leaders of the race, whose power was so often gained through those deep personal experiences which were theirs because of sin. But the whole of Christ's being was lifted up on to this high altitude of moral conviction and service. He set Himself at once to define and to enlarge and even to suspend what had been given to the people in their national and moral law. He exprest His judgment upon the judges and the teachers of the people. He rebuked princes. He declared what were the higher standards of duty. He set ethical principles in His doctrine which Christian men and even high ecclesiastics regard as still only ideal and utopian. He recreated for humanity a moral sense filled with hopefulness. His own experiences took up into themselves all that had been typical and symbolical in the ancient ordinances, and gave to them the interpretation which had

only significance in respect to the moral government of God and the renewal and redemption of mankind. Nowhere does the rite appear more glorious than in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He proclaimed the kingdom. He laid down the principles of its constitution. He promulgated its laws. He was Himself its most glorious example; and He manifested Himself as God's most potent instrument for the establishment of His rule among men.

This revelation of God contains, as the last quality we shall notice, the love of God, which is not so much one of the divine attributes as the essential spirit of God Himself. The very language of Christ shows this divine love. The idea of the fatherhood of God was not altogether unknown to the ancient religion. Even the heathen had had some faint conception of God as a Father. But it was Christ who made this idea of fatherhood the absolute expression of God's nature. It was the one word He always used when He spoke of God. Thus He exhibited the love of God. His power, His goodness, His sovereignty and righteousness were all suffused with this atmosphere of love. Love was the explanation of His coming into the world. Love was the power which sustained Him, and it was to those ideals and ends of love that He sought to bring men and thus secure their final blessedness. Had there been no revelation of

God in Christ, we should never have known the love of God. We might have caught glimpses of His beauty, but it would have been so shrouded, so overcast, that we should never have dwelt in the fulness of that light wherein we now find the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through Jesus Christ.

What then, we may ask, is our relation to this revealer of God? We owe to Him the highest obedience, submission, trust and love. Have we given these? Have we seen the Father yet in Christ? It is through this knowledge of God in Christ that our life abides in the life eternal. No man has seen Him at any time, but the Son who ever dwelleth in the Father, He hath revealed Him. There is no witness mightier than that of Christ Himself; and He has declared that he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. The vision that we need is not the vision of the real and the present, it is the vision of faith; it is the love of the heart; it is the obedience of the will; it is the perception of the spirit; and thus seeing Christ, we, too, may see the Father.

BLACK

THE ATTRACTION OF THE PRESENT

HUGH BLACK

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THE ATTRACTION OF THE PRESENT [1]

PROF. HUGH BLACK, D.D.

"And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"—Genesis 25 : 32.

WE can not suppress a natural sympathy with Esau in this scene between the two brothers. He seems as much sinned against as sinning, and in comparison with the cunning, crafty character of Jacob he appears the better of the two. His very faults lean to virtue's side, we think, as we look at his bold, manly, impulsive figure. There is nothing of the cold calculating selfishness, the astute trickery, the determination to get his pound of flesh, which make his brother appear mean beside him. With our swift and random and surface judgments we are inclined to think it unjust that Esau should be set aside in the great history of grace for one who could be guilty of both malice and fraud in advancing his own interests. We are not at present dealing with the character of Jacob or we would see that this hasty judgment, true

[1] From "The Gift of Influence," by permission of Fleming H. Revell Company. Copyright 1908.

so far as it goes, is something less even than half the truth, and that tho he here and elsewhere sinned and was punished through all his life for his subtlety and selfishness, yet he was not the monster of unbrotherly malice merely which this scene might suggest, and that he had qualities of heart and spirit which made it inevitable that he, and not Esau, should be chosen for the line of God's purpose. Our subject is Esau and his weakness and fall in the presence of his overmastering temptation.

Esau's good qualities are very evident, being of the kind easily recognized and easily popular among men, the typical sportsman who is only a sportsman, bold and frank and free and generous, with no intricacies of character, impulsive and capable of magnanimity, the very opposite of the prudent, dexterous, nimble man of affairs, rather reckless indeed and hot-blooded and passionate. His virtues are already, we see, dangerously near to being vices. Being largely a creature of impulse, he was in a crisis the mere plaything of animal passion, ready to satisfy his desire without thought of consequences. Without self-control, without spiritual insight, without capacity even to know what spiritual issues were, judging things by immediate profit and material advantage, there was not in him depth of nature out of which a really noble character could be cut. This damning

lack of self-control comes out in the passage of our text, the transaction of the birthright. Coming from the hunt hungry and faint, he finds Jacob cooking porridge of lentils and asks for it. The sting of ungovernable appetite makes him feel as if he would die if he did not get it. Jacob takes advantage of his brother's appetite and offers to barter his dish of pottage for Esau's birthright.

There would be some superstition in the minds of both of them as to the value of the birthright. Both of them valued it as a vague advantage, carrying with it a religious worth, but it meant nothing tangible; and here was Esau's temptation, terribly strong to a man of his fiber. He was hungry, and before his fierce desire for the food actually before him such a thing as a prospective right of birth seemed an ethereal thing of no real value. If he thought of any spiritual privilege the birthright might be supposed to confer, it was only to dismiss the thought as not worth considering. Spiritual values had not a high place in his standard of things. He could not be unaware of the material advantages the possession of the birthright would one day mean. He must have known that it was something to be recognized as the eldest son, with special rights of inheritance and precedence and authority after his father's death. These things were real enough to him, even tho he might have no notion of a deeper

meaning in being the heir of the promise. But in the grip of his appetite even these temporal advantages were too distant to weigh much. In the presence of immediate satisfaction the distant appeared shadowy and unreal and not worth sacrificing present enjoyment for. He feels he is going to die, as a man of his type is always sure he will die if he does not get what he wants when the passion is on him; and supposing he does die, it will be poor consolation that he did not barter this intangible and shadowy blessing of his birthright. "Behold I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"

The Bible writers speak of Esau always with a certain contempt, and with all our appreciation of his good natural qualities, his courage and frankness and good humor, we can not help sharing in the contempt. The man who has no self-control, who is swept away by every passion of the moment, whose life is bounded by sense, who has no appreciation of the higher and larger things which call for self-control, that man is, after all, only a superior sort of animal, and not always so very superior at that. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls Esau "a profane person who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." "Profane" means not blasphemous but simply secular, a man who is not touched to finer issues, judging things

by coarse earthly standards, without spiritual aspiration or insight, feeling every sting of flesh keenly, but with no sting of soul toward God. Bold and manly and generous and with many splendid constitutional virtues he may be, but the man himself lacks susceptibility to the highest motives of life. He is easily bent by every wind of impulse, and is open without defense to animal appetite. He is capable of despising the intangible blessing of such a thing as a birthright, even tho he feel it to be a holy thing, because he can not withstand present need. A profane, a secular person as Esau, is the judgment of the New Testament.

The scene where he surrendered his birthright did not settle the destiny of the two brothers—a compact like this could not stand good forever, and in some magical way substitute Jacob for Esau in the line of God's great religious purpose. But this scene, tho it did not settle their destiny in that sense, revealed their character, the one essential thing which was necessary for the spiritual succession to Abraham; and Esau failed here in this test as he would fail anywhere. His question to reassure himself, "What profit shall this birthright do to me?" reveals the bent of his life and explains his failure. True self-control means willingness to resign the small for the sake of the great, the present for the sake of the future, the material for

the sake of the spiritual, and that is what faith makes possible. Of course, Esau did not think he was losing the great by grasping at the small. At the moment the birthright, just because it was distant, appeared insignificant. He had no patience to wait, no faith to believe in the real value of anything that was not material, no self-restraint to keep him from instant surrender to the demand for present gratification.

This is the power of all appeal to passion, that it is present, with us now, to be had at once. It is clamant, imperious, insistent, demanding to be satiated with what is actually present. It has no use for a far-off good. It wants immediate profit. This is temptation, alluring to the eye, whispering in the ear, plucking by the elbow, offering satisfaction now. Here and now—not hereafter; this thing, that red pottage there—not an ethereal unsubstantial thing like a birthright! What is the good of it if we die? And we are like to die if we do not get this gratification the senses demand. In the infatuation of appetite all else seems small in comparison; the birthright is a poor thing compared to the red pottage.

It is the distortion of vision which passion produces, the exaggeration of the present which temptation creates, making the small look like the great, and discrediting the value of the thing lost. The vivid lurid descrip-

tion in the Proverbs of the young man void of understanding snared in the street by the strange woman gives both these elements of the effect of passion, the weak surrender to impulse, and the distortion of vision which blinds to the real value of what is given up for the gratification. "He goeth straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

But it is not merely lack of self-control which Esau displays by the question of our text. It is also lack of appreciation of spiritual values. In a vague way he knew that the birthright meant a religious blessing, and in the grip of his temptation that looked to him as purely a sentiment, not to be seriously considered as on a par with a material advantage. The profane man, the secular man, may not be just a creature of impulse, he may have his impulses in good control, but he has no place for what is unseen. He asks naturally, What shall it profit? Men who judge by the eye, by material returns only, who are frankly secular, think themselves great judges of profit, and they too would not make much of a birthright if it meant only something sentimental, as they would call it. The real and not the ideal, the actual and not the visionary, the thing seen and not the thing unseen—they would not hesitate

more than Esau over the choice between the pottage and the birthright. They judge by substance, and do not understand about the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

How easy it is for all of us to drift into the class of the profane, the secular persons as Esau; to have our spiritual sensibility blunted; to lose our appreciation of things unseen; to be so taken up with the means of living that we forget life itself and the things that alone give it security and dignity! How easy, when soul wars with sense, to depreciate everything that is beyond sense, and let the whole moral tone be relaxed! There is much cause for the apostle to warn us to "Look diligently lest there be among us any profane person as Esau who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

We, too, can despise our birthright by living far below our privileges, and far below our spiritual opportunities. We have our birthright as sons of God, born to an inheritance as joint-heirs with Christ. We belong by essential nature not to the animal kingdom, but to the kingdom of Heaven; and when we forget it and live only with reference to the things of sense and time, we are disinheriting ourselves as Esau did. The secular temptation strikes a weak spot in all of us, suggesting that the spiritual life, God's love and holiness, the kingdom of Heaven and His

righteousness, the life of faith and prayer and communion, are dim and shadowy things, as in the land that is very far off. "What profit shall this birthright do to me?"

What shall it profit? seems a sane and sensible question, to be considered in a businesslike fashion. It is the right question to ask, but it has a wider scope and another application. What profit the mess of pottage if I lose my birthright? What profit the momentary gratification of even imperious passion if we are resigning our true life, and losing the clear vision and the pure heart? What profit to make only provision for the flesh, if of the flesh we reap but corruption? What profit the easy self-indulgence, if we are bartering peace and love and holiness and joy? "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world (and not merely a contemptible mess of pottage) and lose his own soul?" What profit if in the insistence of appetite men go like an ox to the slaughter, knowing not that it is for their life? "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

BLAND

GOODNESS FOUND UNPROFITABLE

SALEM GOLDWORTH BLAND

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GOODNESS FOUND UNPROFITABLE

S. G. Bland, D.D.

"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."—Psalm 73 : 13.

How well most of us know that feeling! The man in business who has been honest; who has never stooped to puffing or adulterating or using a sliding scale of prices; who has disdained to flatter and fawn, to subscribe to things he disapproves, or prostitute his church-membership to gain custom, and who sees the crowded store of a rival who will use any means to draw trade or make a sale!

The candidate for public office, honorable, straightforward, refusing to make promises he is not prepared to fulfil, permitting no bribery, scorning to appeal to party passion or to religious or racial animosity, conducting his canvass in a high-minded way, and left far behind at the polls by a man who "plays the game" and whose one principle is to win!

The conscientious man who loses his situation because he will not work on Sunday or swear to a false invoice!

The merchant who finds orders slipping away from him because he does not grease the palm of the agent!

The contractor whose tender is not accepted because he does not contribute to party funds!

The boy or girl at school, hard-working and honorable, who loses the prize to a clever cheat!

Any one who has tried to be upright and in a worldly sense has failed, and who sees, as he generally can, some one prospering who has no scruples!

Here, however, we have need to be careful. Our vanity may be misleading us. Not all conscientious people who fail fail because of their conscientiousness, just as not all who succeed, tho not strictly upright, succeed because of their want of principle. A man may be good but unfitted for his business. A man of easy conscience may have fitness and energy. Vanity or pious sentimentality must not blind us to the incompetency of some sincerely religious people.

It must be admitted, however, that there are cases where the piety has been the stumbling-block; where, if the conscience had been a little more flexible, if the moral standard had not been so high, the man would have succeeded. Of such cases what is to be said?

In the very nature of things goodness must sometimes meet with worldly failure. Men must sometimes cleanse their hearts in that respect in vain.

The very condition of life as a training-school for character is that virtue shall never

be sure of earthly reward. If it were, all would be virtuous, and the universal virtue would be worth just nothing at all. The basest of all, those governed by a coldly calculating selfishness, would be of all the most virtuous.

So in the nature of things the issues of actions must be hidden from view. You may be promoted for your conscientiousness; you may be dismissed. Integrity to-day may win a friend; to-morrow it may make a lifelong enemy. One man's goodness brings him popularity and applause; another's brings him the crown of thorns and the cross.

It is well that men should be so tested. Not long will any man keep his hands clean whose only motive in keeping them clean is that by a discerning public appreciative of clean hands they may always be kept full. Honesty is the best policy; but he who is for that reason honest is not honest, only politic.

And we may well question the integrity of a man who is disappointed and bitter because his integrity has not brought him the return he looked for. He will not have cleansed his hands or his heart very thoroughly. An integrity that needs to be comforted and cosseted all the while by visible rewards, that can only live in the sunny genial atmosphere of success and popularity, is too frail and delicate a thing to be of much worth in this world.

The only man to be depended on to keep his hands clean is the man to whom cleanness of hands is a good thing in itself.

Failure may be the indispensable condition of goodness. Sometimes it is the want of worldly success that keeps the hands clean.

Elevation to the throne transformed the modest, valiant Saul into a tyrant, jealous, suspicious, malignant. The herdsman would not have developed the desperate pride and the obstinate self-will that make the career of Israel's first king the saddest tragedy in Old Testament history. The foul sin that blotted so indelibly the reign of David the king would never have stained the soul of David the shepherd. If Solomon had been poor he would not have surrounded himself with the splendor and the voluptuousness that quenched his radiant morning in so dreary a night.

That political honor, that flourishing business, that social success—what effect would it have had upon the character? Is there not a sufficiently clear answer in the fact that that was the last thing considered, if, indeed, it was considered at all?

It is generally supposed to be easier to be honest when rich, but wealth and success have more searching temptations than those they deliver from. The most perilous of all temptations is the temptation to pride. The hardest class for the gospel of Christ to reach is that

of those who count themselves self-made men. They are in greater peril than men of strong animal passions or of infirm will. No man is so near great failure as he who has attained great success. Against some of the most wholesome and corrective influences of life wealth is a strong castle.

A man of great wealth died in our own time of whom a newspaper of high reputation reported that he said not long before his death, "I have done everything I tried to do. I have realized all my ideals. I am satisfied with my life." If the words were really his, which is difficult to believe, and if he really meant them, which is still more difficult to believe, one can only say that that man of great wealth and power would have probably ended his days nearer God if he had ended them in a penitentiary. There, at least, he would not have been conscious of having realized all his ideals.

Paul said he had learned "both how to be abased" and "how to abound." The latter is the harder lesson to learn.

Men who profit by clean hands will never save the world. It is fitting and right that integrity should be rewarded. It is pleasant to see godly people succeed. But the integrity that succeeds in a worldly sense will never save the world. It will not silence the ancient sneer, "Doth Job fear God for naught?"

Any number of people who are somewhat slippery will tell you they are willing, nay wishful, to be honest and truthful and conscientious, if only they are properly remunerated for being so. "Pay me well and I'll be honest," laughingly said a friend of mine to a board of directors who were thinking of appointing him to a highly responsible position, and the jesting remark has its philosophy.

The incorruptible and paying honesty has its value, no doubt, but it is not inspiring. It is "the incorruptible and losing honesty" (to borrow Charles Lamb's fine phrase from his eulogy on his father), the conscientiousness that trips a man, the integrity that pulls down disaster, the truth that leads to the cross —this is what silences the sneer and strikes the world with awe and keeps faith alive on the earth.

"Heaven is for those who have failed on earth." That is a noble truth, but it is desirable that such failures should be kept from their natural destination as long as possible, for they are the salt of the earth, the soul of all its goodness, the very spring of moral progress. Of all its benefactors the world owes most to its martyrs.

It is a small thing that you have not made as many dollars as you might, if you have helped your fellow men to believe in disinterestedness. Depend upon it, if your god-

liness makes you fail your failure will be worth far more to the world than your success.

All the great reforms of the world's history have been won by men who failed. Half a century ago there were none in the United States so far from honor as the Abolitionists. They were denounced, ostracized, pelted, mobbed, tarred and feathered; some of them were murdered. John Brown's attempt with eighteen men to free the slaves was a failure that would have seemed farcical had it not been so tragical. Yet when Abraham Lincoln signed the Proclamation of Emancipation, it was John Brown and the Abolitionists who guided the pen.

But we have only dealt with one side of this question. Two things, at least, are to be said on the other side. The first is this, that most people do not even in the lowest sense cleanse their hands in vain. Goodness does not generally involve failure. To think that it does is to believe one of the devil's lies.

Righteousness tends to prosperity as it tends to health and longevity. It would, no doubt, be a mistake for a young man starting in life to think that a Christian life guarantees worldly success. It is a still graver mistake to think that Christian principle will handicap him.

Take a hundred God-fearing young men at twenty-five, and another hundred godless

men of the same age, all of them starting alike, with no capital but their brains and their character, and watch them, not for one year, nor perhaps for five, but for ten, for twenty, and then compare them. Is there any man who has observed human life carefully for twenty years who doubts which group will possess the more wealth or fill the greater number of positions of trust and influence.

Let the investigation be made in our great cities to-day, and it will be discovered, as it has been discovered in similar investigations before, that the greater portion of their wealth and the most of the chief positions of honor are in the hands of members of Christian churches. Some of these, no doubt, have suffered from their very success. But the fact remains that wealth gravitates in the long run to men of character.

It is a very narrow and short-sighted vision that envies the unrighteous. "Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: for surely there is a sequel" (Prov. 23: 17, 18, marginal reading). Ay, a sequel, a second volume. The biographies of men are not always written in one volume, not always in two. "I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil." So rapid and stately and seemingly enduring a growth and yet so evil! He fixed all eyes,

some in admiration, some in envy, some in dismay. But something drew your gaze away, and when you looked again at the wide-spreading tree, to your amazement it was not to be seen. You rubbed your eyes, you searched diligently. But no, "it could not be found."

Nothing is so profitable as lying and cheating—for a little while. The wisdom of the ages is in the familiar lines,

> Tho the mills of God grind slowly,
> Yet they grind exceeding small;
> Tho with patience He stands waiting,
> With exactness grinds He all.

And the second thing to be said on this other side is this, that as goodness does not generally involve failure, so evil generally does.

There may possibly be a darting pang in the thought, "I have cleansed my heart, washed my hands in vain," but what compared with the enduring and corroding bitterness of the thought, "I have dabbled my hands in filth, defiled my heart in vain!"

To do violence to one's sense of right, to make oneself mean to oneself, to every right-thinking man, to besmirch one's own reputation, to lie, to cheat, to be two-faced, to crawl snake-like on one's face in the dust, and then, after all, to fail—that is to drink the last dregs of bitterness.

One of the most towering figures in the history of the United States is that of Daniel Webster, called by his admirers "the god-like," and of so majestic an intellect and presence as almost to justify the daring epithet. One of the great orators of all lands and ages, he ruled men with more than kingly power.

To him came the dream of the Presidency, and for that prize he sold himself. It seemed unattainable except with the support of the slaveholding South. To secure that support, he, the son of free-soil New England, scoffed at the Abolitionists, derided the anti-slavery doctrine, stood forth as the defender of slavery, the fugitive slave law, and the gag.

"His character," writes Goldwin Smith, "to which friends of freedom in the North had long looked up, fell with a crash like that of a mighty tree, of a lofty pillar, of a rock that for ages had breasted the waves—

> "So fallen, so lost" (mourned Whittier);
> "The light withdrawn
> Which once he wore,
> The glory from his gray hairs gone
> Forever more."

He did not receive even the nomination of his party. Deeply disappointed, his health and his spirits gave way, and he retired to his home to die.

The British East India Company, while it

ruled India, was timorously apprehensive of exciting the suspicion or antagonism of the natives. Under this fear it showed such shame of its Christianity as Mohammedan conquerors of India had never shown of their Mohammedanism. It excluded missionaries as long as possible, and did all it could to impede and discourage their work when they at last found entrance. It subsidized idol temples and lent British troops to do honor to idolatrous and obscene ceremonies. It petted and pampered the sepoys, discharging any of them who became Christians, so that in 1857 there was not a native Christian in the employment of the Indian government. And all its cowardice was in vain, and the torrent of flame and blood that inundated the Northwest provinces and Central India in the awful summer of 1857 showed the very devil's scorn of such methods of establishment.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter but this—that a man should aim at honorable success, but be prepared for still more honorable failure?

Let "never say fail" be his motto, where pluck and hard work and perseverance and ingenuity can win, but let him say "fail" the moment he is asked to pay the devil's price for success. No man is prepared to live who is not prepared at any time to die, and no man is fit for success who is not prepared to accept failure.

BLOMFIELD

THE IMPERATIVE CLAIMS OF CHRIST
UPON HIS FOLLOWERS

WILLIAM ERNEST BLOMFIELD

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THE IMPERATIVE CLAIMS OF CHRIST UPON HIS FOLLOWERS

W. E. Blomfield, B.A., B.D.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—Luke 9 : 57-62.

We have a parallel to this narrative in Matthew's Gospel. There are, however, two points of divergence from Luke's version. There is no mention of the third would-be disciple, and what is still more worthy of observation, the historic setting of the narrative is absolutely different. In Matthew the incidents take place early in the Galilean ministry, in Luke they are found when that ministry had definitely closed. It is quite impossible to reconcile the two evangelists, and I think we may regard Luke's setting of the story as likely to be the more

accurate. To Matthew the question of chronological sequence was one of subordinate importance. His mind and heart were arrested by the sayings of Jesus, and they are everything to him. Accordingly, in the Sermon on the Mount, he groups together logia which may have been spoken on divers occasions, and in the thirteenth chapter he gives us a string of seven parables which few intelligent readers can think were spoken at one and the same time. Luke was more of the historian, and tells us in the preface to his gospel that it was his purpose "to write in order." We accept, then, the sequence of events as narrated in this chapter. And if we grasp the situation here revealed we shall understand more clearly the sternness and severity with which Jesus addrest these men about whom I want to speak.

Our Lord had ended His Galilean ministry. A definite crisis is marked by verse 51. He set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem. Mark, according to his wont, gives us a still more striking picture. Jesus strode in front of His disciples, and as they followed they were amazed and afraid. A great fear and awe fell upon them as they looked upon the resolute Savior hastening to meet His cross. It was amid the feelings awakened by such a crisis that these three men met Christ. Will they become His disciples? Have they some good thing in their hearts toward Him? Then

let them at once translate thought into decisive action. It was no time for temporizing and delay. Jesus needed men who understood the hour and its solemn call. Half-hearted disciples, followers who had a mere sentimental liking for Him but who gave the "first" place to any other interest, were of no use to His kingdom. He must have men who, for weal or wo, without reserve or hesitation, yet with knowledge and intelligence, would follow in His train. Decision firm and irrevocable must now be made. Never more would Christ pass this way. Thus bearing in mind the gravity of the crisis, we shall find some clue to the hard sayings in our text. Here are three men. The first brings Christ an unconditional offer of allegiance, and is repelled. The second is called by Christ to a great work and the reluctance shown by the man is rebuked. The third is a volunteer, but a double-minded man who has to be sharply reminded that thoroughness is an essential requisite for service in the kingdom. And we may see here three permanent types of human character—the impulsive, the diffident, the irresolute.

"Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." It was a fine offer. There was no reserve or limit to it. Jesus had not many such, and we might suppose that He would have promptly accepted the allegiance of this generous heart. One feature of the

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heavenly life is that the Lamb's servants follow "whithersoever he leadeth." Here is a man who is ready to begin the heavenly life of perfect surrender on earth. Yet the volunteer is met with the chilling rejoinder, "Foxes have holes, the birds of heaven have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head."

There is not a trace of insincerity in the man. Nor is there any sign that he was filled with self-complacency at the splendor of his own deed. All seems genuine and modest enough. But Christ's answer reveals a man who was easily swayed by the feeling of the moment, who would be the victim of any sudden impulse, easily moved by superficial excitement to the utterance of tremendous words whose implications he had never realized. He was simply thoughtless, the kind of man who would begin to build without first considering if he had wherewith to complete the costly enterprise. And so Jesus flings him back upon himself and bids him reflect. The man had been attracted by our Lord as many amiable people are attracted to-day. He had sat perhaps among the mountain lilies and listened to those wonderful beatitudes, or he had stood by the lake with the summer sun gleaming upon its waters as Jesus taught the multitudes from the boat, or he had heard of the wondrous works of Him who rebuked the storm and the angrier

passions which rage in human breasts. The rapt face of the young Prophet of Nazareth and His words of wisdom and grace had been an irresistible spell upon this open, ingenuous nature. He would fain follow Him and listen to the flow of golden speech every day, and so he cries, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." But Christ knew the shallowness of this man's religion. In effect He says, "Understandest thou what thou sayest? Wilt thou indeed follow me whithersoever I lead? My way is not always amongst flower-clad hills nor by the quiet lakeside; it leads sometimes into the wilderness and amidst stony paths where the feet ache and bleed. Even now the Master thou wouldst serve goes to meet a cruel doom at the hands of men. Wilt thou follow Him there and share His cup of pain? It is no light thing for a scribe accustomed to a life of cultured ease to become the follower of One who is a homeless fugitive upon the face of the earth." This was not the only time Jesus checked emotional excitability. Once when He was preaching, a woman, carried away by His personal charm, exclaimed, "Blesséd is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." And He met this gush of sentiment with the quiet answer, "Yea, rather blesséd are they that hear the word of God and keep it." On another occasion He saw the multitudes following Him, and He turned and said, "If

any man cometh to me and hateth not his father, mother, wife, brethren. sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple."

Herein I see the kindness of Christ. He would save a man from the pain and humiliation which ever come to him who begins a high enterprise whose difficulties and disappointments he has neither gaged nor suspected. Is there any picture more pitiable in Bunyan's allegory than that of Pliable, who had thoughtlessly set out on pilgrimage, and who at last is found sneaking among his former companions, his own self-respect gone, and himself the object of their mockery and contempt? It had been better for him not to have known the way of life than, having known it, to depart from the way of righteousness.

Not less clear is the wisdom of Christ's candor. Much as He suffered when men went back and walked no more with Him, it were better so than that they should follow Him under illusions. Fair-weather disciples are out of place in a kingdom where patient endurance is an inexorable necessity. The failure of this type of character is graphically depicted in the parable of the sower. These are they who hear the word and—alas for the fatal word!—immediately with joy receive it. Yet have they no root in themselves, but are only temporary, and when tribulation

or persecution arise because of the word, immediately—the declension is as swift as the profession—they are made to stumble. The reminder is not an untimely one for these days of revival. "A man who is touched only on the surface of his soul by a religious movement and has yielded to the current without understanding what it means, whither it tends, and what it involves, is doomed to apostasy in the season of trial. When the tide of enthusiasm subsides and he is left to himself to carry on single-handed the struggle with temptation, he has no heart for the work, and his religion withers like the corn growing on rocky places under the scorching heat of the summer sun" (Bruce). Therefore, count the cost before thou takest upon thy lips so great a pledge as this: "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

The diffident man is another type of character. He does not proffer his allegiance. He is timid and shy in the presence of great demands and heroic tasks. Jesus has looked into the soul of this man and seen the stuff of which apostles, missionaries, confessors and martyrs are made. And He summons him to the sublime work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The retiring man pleads home duties. Elsewhere we read of one who had married a wife, and therefore could not come. Here we have a man who pleads the claims of filial piety. "Suffer me first to go and bury

my father." The ordinary interpretation of these words is that this man's father was dead, and that he simply sought permission to wait till the funeral was over. It may be so, or it may be that this was a proverbial way of sacrificing Christ to the claims of family affection. He shrinks from the high calling and excuses himself by saying that there are ordinary every-day duties to be done. It is an Eastern way of declaring that other claims take precedence of some great demand made upon him, and he says that he will obey when he has buried his father. Take it in either sense, the word of Christ is clear, and the principle on which it is based is indisputable. There are crises in life when the duty of burying one's father must be subordinated to a more imperious call. When in the hour of an empire's peril, the summons comes to a soldier to fight his country's battle, his oath to his king must be preferred before piety to parents, however right and beautiful that may be under ordinary circumstances. Christ always claims to stand first. Whoever loves father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him. Not that He was indifferent to the sacred ties of home life. In His own mortal agony He commended Mary to the beloved disciple. In the chapter immediately before that from which my text is taken, He claimed the right to send a man home to be a missionary there when the man would fain have

remained at His side. Christ claims the rights of absolute ownership over every one of us. And surely this fact leads to faith in His higher nature. No one man of a particular race and age can be the one absolute authority for all men of all ages and all races unless he is something more than man, however great and good. What think ye of Christ? Who is He that He may command us all as He wills and look for our unhesitating and unreserved obedience?

Consider, too, the principle of Christ's answer to this man. "Let the dead bury their own dead." Let those who have no spiritual life in them attend to the tasks which need no spiritual life for their discharge, but let the man who is fitted for high work which only a rare soul can accomplish devote himself to it as to his heaven-appointed mission. This has been called Christ's law of economy in the service of the kingdom. Every man is bound to serve where he can be and do the most for his king. He must trade with his pound and make it yield all that is possible. If one has in him the capacity of a great statesman—ah, what would we not give for such an one at the present hour!—he has no right to be following the plow. If a young man is gifted with the spiritual vision and power of expression which made the prophet of the Lord, he is guilty of unholy waste if he stands behind a counter measuring off

calico. It is related of the late Dr. Parker that he said: "I came early to the conclusion that the Almighty did not intend me to carry bricks and mortar up a ladder." He was right. Not that these tasks are common or unclean.

> Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine.

But myriads can attend to these duties, while the statesman, the missionary, the preacher, are few and far to seek. Do I speak to any man who has heard Christ's call to preach the gospel of the kingdom? It is not for us to run unless we are bidden. No man taketh this honor to himself but he that is called of God. If, however, thou hast heard the voice of Jesus, I would pray that thou mayest have no rest till thou hast yielded Him obedience. Listen to His own word: "Let the dead bury their own dead, but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God."

The irresolute man is he who said, "Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first bid them farewell who are at my house." The natural request was met with what seems an unreasonable answer. A similar petition was made by Elisha to Elijah when he was called to the prophetic office. And Elijah granted it. Is Elijah more considerate and human than Jesus? We must look beneath the surface. Martin Luther says, in commenting upon this

verse, "The New Testament was written for men with heads upon their shoulders." Elijah granted the request because it was safe to grant it. Jesus saw here a man easily led away, to whom the farewell visit would be fatal. Once in the family circle all kinds of obstacles would be put in his way; tender reproaches and tearful pleadings would be leveled against his resolve; heart-moving pictures would be put before him of the perils which must attend the man who was wild enough to throw in his lot with Jesus of Nazareth. And under the warmth of home affection his little courage would melt away. To go home would be to say farewell to the kingdom forever. Therefore, in a graphic way, our Lord reminds this volunteer that half-hearted men are useless in the service of God. He who puts his hand to the plow must give eye and mind to his work or he will be the derision of the field when the furrow is complete. Even with our heavy instruments drawn by two horses (sometimes more intelligent than the man behind) attention to the business in hand is essential to success. But with the Hebrew plow of much lighter construction, with only one stilt to guide it, leaving the other hand free to use the goad to the often untractable ox, undivided interest was indispensable.

Let us lay to heart the truth. The half-hearted are not fit for the kingdom of God.

Are they fit for any kingdom worth the having? No man can make a scholar who is not prepared to scorn delights and live laborious days. No young man will be successful in business if his chief thought all day is of the hour when he may escape from the office to his football or golf. Ay, no man can be a king in the sphere of athletics unless he is prepared to pay the price of self-control and severe training. How, then, should we be fit for the highest kingdom if, while we profess to be Christ's, our hearts are not wholly His but with the world? Yes, it is hard to be a Christian. And the Lord in very kindness and truth tells us that nothing less than personal devotion to Himself will carry us through. There are hours in life when we have to learn with pain the lesson of forgetting the past. Bright and beautiful and not unholy as it was, we may not nurse and fondle it, for God has called us to a new work which demands all our strength, and there may not be a look behind. The Master here spoke out of the depth of His own experience. His face was now set to Jeruselem. Behind Him lay the happy home of Nazareth, and warm hearts and kindly friends were in the northern province. It was not easy to turn to the unloving city, and Peter sought to dissuade Him from the sorrow and suffering which lay in His God-appointed path. But the well-meant entreaty was rejected as a temptation from hell.

It was a temptation to look back. He could not afford to palter with it, to give it lodgment for one moment. How much less may we? Has the world been gaining too much influence over us? Has its spell weakened our hold of the plow? Then let us look to Him who can reenforce our will and give us a single heart. The sorrow of looking back is this, that it never ends there. In the long run it means going back from the plow altogether. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." It can not be otherwise. That love of the world is the backward look, which, persisted in, issues in apostasy. Consider Him who endured to the end lest ye be weary and faint in your mind. Pray to Him who giveth power to the faint. Then grip the plow more earnestly, and press on. Be not of them who draw back unto perdition and in whom God has no pleasure, rather aspire to be of that elect company who believe unto the saving of the soul.

BONNEY

PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE ATHENIANS

THOMAS GEORGE BONNEY

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PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE ATHENIANS

The Rev. T. G. Bonney, Sc.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

"What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you."—Acts 17 : 23.

Paul's landing at Neapolis was fraught with consequences even more important than that of Cæsar or of Augustine on our own shores. In his short voyage from Troas he had passed from Eastern to Western influences—had made, perhaps unconsciously, another great forward step in the process of emancipation, which began when that vision on the Damascus road changed the persecutor into the missionary of Christ crucified and risen. Some fourteen years had sufficed to demonstrate that the gospel was a substitute for, not an addition to, the law of Moses; that Christianity was to be something different from Judaism completed by the Messiah. Antioch had become the center of missionary enterprise rather than Jerusalem, and its preachers were proclaiming that the new creed was world-wide in its comprehensiveness, recognizing neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither Jew nor Gentile. Yet for a time its missionaries, as if shrinking from a task so gigantic as evangelizing

the West, had restricted themselves to Eastern lands, until on his second missionary journey, some inward impulse brought Paul to the neighborhood of the Dardanelles, and he heard in the visions of the night the call of the man of Macedonia.

Hitherto he had labored where the Roman rule, like our own in India, was that of an alien power; now he was to confront it in its home. Hitherto he had delivered his message to men of kindred races and habits of thought; now he was to proclaim to the West that the East would lead its conqueror captive, and that those who longed to realize the Golden Age of their poets must look to the Syrian not the Latian hills. How would this message appeal to these energetic, practical Europeans? How would Christianity deal with the new conditions—the wealth, the art, the power of brain and muscle, which had welded into one empire the diverse peoples on the Mediterranean shores?

The answer to most of these questions was not long in coming. Athens was still pre-eminent in art, architecture, and intellectual activity: it was then, to use a modern phrase, the chief university town in the Roman Empire, just as Corinth, which was next to be visited, was still the proverbial city of commercial millionaires.

Now that the touchstone of the higher criticism, we may be told, has deprived the

New Testament Scriptures of all historical value, this story is doubtful and the speech is only what some writer of a later age thought Paul ought to have said. While I should willingly concede that the verbal inspiration of the Bible is a fetish of human invention, no less than papal infallibility, I am not afraid, tho fairly acquainted with what those critics have written, to express at least as much confidence in the general accuracy of the historical parts of the New Testament as in that of other ancient documents, the authors of which were, above all things, anxious to tell the truth. I do not expect men, differing from ourselves in race and environment, to write exactly as we should do, after more than eighteen centuries of literary criticism and progress, aided by the printing-press. I believe the meeting on the Hill of Mars to be a fact, and Paul's address to the Athenians a condensed report of what he actually said; this being most abridged in the latter part, where the subjects—Jesus and the resurrection—were familiar to those for whom the author was writing.

What Paul meant by these two words we can infer from the four epistles already mentioned. The first of those to the Corinthians contains a full statement of his own belief as to the resurrection, and expressions frequent in all of them, justify me, I think, in asserting that, tho the doctrine of the person

of Christ had not yet been stated with its subsequent fulness and precision, the incarnation and the resurrection were the key-notes of Paul's message to the learning and the thought of Europe in the headquarters of esthetic paganism.

Never was that message proclaimed amid surroundings so impressive. I assume—for this seems to me the natural interpretation of the words—that Paul was speaking on the Hill of Mars, tho not before a formal sitting of the Areopagos court. From that limestone knoll we can still look down on an Athens beautiful in its delicate color harmony, but then the eye must have been arrested almost everywhere by some pillared portico or sculptured shrine in that city, full of idols. Barely a furlong distant, the great rock of the Acropolis rose up against the sky, crowned with the temple of the virgin goddess and its not less stately Propylæa, even now magnificent in their ruin, but then dreams of beauty crystallized in gleaming marble. Amid such surroundings, amid the triumphs of pagan art in the city preeminent above all others for the visible expressions of its religious beliefs, Paul declared the message which, tho at first it seemed to the Greeks foolishness, was, nevertheless, to subjugate the world.

Its terms exhibit such a delicate tact that we might well plead them as internal evidence of its genuineness. Most of Paul's

hearers, we must remember, were theists—tho the gods of the populace were many and those of Epicurus supposed to sit aloof from this struggling world—so he meets them at the outset on common ground. They had also a deep sense of religion; this he recognizes, while hinting that from want of right guidance it erred by excess, and skilfully avails himself of an inscription, which, whatever be its precise meaning, he quotes as an admission of imperfect knowledge. Thence he passes on to appeal from the dominant polytheism to the true pantheism; declaring that, if, as their own poets admitted, "we are God's offspring," the World-father finds in man himself a nobler shrine than in graven images of gold, silver and stone, the work of human hands. Longing to discover God in nature, he seems to declare, feeling after Him in the twilight of ignorance, ye have wandered far through want of a guide; now the Creator calls you back to Himself. "What ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you."

The Parthenon, like many another temple of the gods on windy headland or in fertile vale, is now a ruin, yet the gospel message to the students of philosophy and science of the twentieth century is not so very different from that which Paul proclaimed to their predecessors at Athens—"Jesus and the resurrection"—Christ the incarnate Lord and

Christ risen from the dead! We, who have been entrusted with it to-day, can still meet those who hesitate to accept it on the same common ground; for that crude atheism, disdaining everything incapable of being seen under a microscope, or tested by a galvanometer, which once seemed growing in favor, is now generally repudiated by thoughtful men, who will at least admit, in the words of one, himself the reverse of credulous, that "The consciousness of a Power manifested to us through all phenomena has been growing ever clearer."[1] This power he declared to be inscrutable, and many still maintain it so to be. At Athens probably a single altar, and that a humble one, bore the inscription *ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ ΘΕΩ*, but now this sometimes claims the monopoly of all. In a sense we must admit the words to be true; for the conditioned can not measure the unconditioned, the finite can not comprehend the infinite. But even granting the agnosticism of some scientific men in the present age to be a not wholly unjustifiable protest against the overweening self-confidence of a certain class of profest theologians, I venture to ask whether we might not with equal truth also assert "Behold, we know not anything" of our environment and our fellow creatures. Matter, force, energy, life, mind—what do all these terms

[1] Herbert Spencer. "First Principles" (Part 1, Ch. 5, Sec. 31).

mean? Travel back in thought through the peopling and the making of worlds and tell me what existed before them and at what call, in the beginning and from out of the void, the Ilion of the universe "like a mist rose into towers." Science leads us from age to age through a wondrous land, but at last her path vanishes in a cloud and she regretfully exclaims, "I know no more." That cloud, if we will not accept any other guide, is impenetrable, but from it a Voice is calling, "follow me," and it will lead us to the light beyond.

We are, however, sometimes told that in substituting on our altar the name of Christ Jesus for the unknown God, we have deserted the party of science, because the incarnation and the resurrection, tho on different grounds, are alike incredible. That both are improbable, both contrary to general experience, I readily admit, but think it would be rash to say more. As regards the former, am I forbidden as a theist, say a pantheist if you like, to concur with a Christian writer whose orthodoxy is beyond suspicion, in declaring that all things were made by the eternal Reason, and that they manifest His indwelling presence, which renders each of them "at once a revelation and a prophecy, a thing of beauty and finished workmanship, worthy to exist for its own sake, and yet a step to higher purposes, an instru-

ment for grander work?''[1] If this be so, if all nature when regarded in one aspect be an incarnation of the divine, in itself unknowable, can we declare *the* incarnation an *á priori* impossibility? If matter and life, if the inorganic and the organic are manifestations of the Creator, may not He also have revealed Himself, for an end which is unique in history, in a manner no less unique? Was there no need for such a revelation, no anxious expectancy, no restless craving for a deliverer? Man, left to himself, was a failure. That was almost universally admitted by those who looked thoughtfully on the world; Philosophy, his highest effort to rise above the level of an animal, was the religion of few and had no message for the masses. We know what the Roman Empire was in the days when Paul preached at Athens; what would it have been by now had Christ never come? I answer by pointing to what it is, tho He came.

The resurrection, however, to those trained in the school of science, presents more difficulties than the incarnation. The latter, they would admit, does not fall within its scope and can be neither proved nor disproved by its methods. The former can be indirectly tested, and demands belief in the miraculous. Science declares ''that such

[1] J. R. Illingworth. ''The Incarnation and Development.'' Lux Mundi, page 191. 1890.

things do not happen," and that "the ashes of Jesus mingled with the dust of Palestine." But can this assertion be justified? Is it not a little too dogmatic? Before replying, it will be helpful to ascertain, if possible, what the apostle meant by the resurrection. Some of his hearers, particularly among the Epicureans, would have been ready to lament, with Moschus,[1] that death was to man a "boundless, wakeless sleep." Most of them, however, believed in a future life. Some looked for absorption into the divine essence, but the majority for a continuity of personal consciousness, and even of form, tho that was only of a fantom kind. Such a belief failed to satisfy: the halcyon calm and purple light of the Elysian fields, with their flowers of asphodel and groves of scented laurel, seemed a poor substitute for the substantial, if more checkered, joys of this present life. To all these Paul proclaimed the resurrection, not as a philosophic speculation, but as a fact in human history. From his own writings, and those of his companions or immediate successors, we can see plainly what his message meant and how great was its advance on the ideas which then found a place in the religions of Europe. Starting from the common ground of a belief in the self which survived death, he told them that this would at some particular epoch again assume, in what man-

1 "Elegy on Bion." Idyl 3, 106.

ner we do not know, a state analogous to its former one. Terms, which, if not found in Paul's writings, are quite consistent with them, such as "the new heaven," "the new earth," "the new Jerusalem," however figurative they may be, must imply some kind of relationship between the living personality and a material environment. Between the body which is now in existence, and that which shall be hereafter, is a connection, the apostle tells us, like that of the seed and the future plant—a statement which plainly implies that they are linked together by more than identity of consciousness. Only three or four years later he spoke in these terms of the resurrection of the dead: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." To proclaim this he abandoned all that to most men makes life valuable, and his faith rested on his personal certainty that "now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." What then was this rising from the dead? Enough remains from what was written by Paul himself, his companions, or his immediate successors, to enable us to answer the question in general terms. Christ died on the cross, and His body was at once buried outside the walls of Jerusalem in a rock-cut tomb. In

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the early morning, about six-and-thirty hours afterward, the heavy stone which closed the entrance was rolled back without the help of man, and the crucified One, leaving there His cerements, came forth and appeared, seemingly in familiar garb, to one or other of His disciples. But the Christ whom they saw on the Emmaus road, in the closed chamber at Jerusalem, on the shore of the Galilean Lake, was not in all respects the same with the Christ who had taught in the Temple courts and had been nailed to the cross. The body, in which He suffered these things, had vanished; the tomb was empty, for otherwise the strongest proof that the resurrection was not an illusion but a fact would have been wanting. The body in which Christ now came, tho perceptible to the senses, appeared and disappeared at will, in no way impeded by obstacles which are ordinarily insuperable. It was indeed the Lord, but the disciples, as sometimes happens when friends meet after a long separation, did not always recognize Him immediately. In this recognition there must have been a subjective element, tho they were permitted tests sufficient to prove the objective reality of His body. The change which awaits His servants had become in Christ more or less complete before He left the tomb on that first Easter morning.

Such are the outlines of the story. We grant that we can not appeal to either experi-

mental tests or investigations in the natural order for confirmatory evidence. We freely admit the event to be without a parallel, but maintain the occasion and person to be alike unique, and in so doing venture to ask whether any recent advances of science, great as they have been, have increased our difficulties in believing that story to be true?

It is now forty-two years since the British Association met in this university town, and during that interval, new—and I might almost say revolutionary—views about the nature and constitution of matter have become generally accepted. The atoms, once supposed to be its ultimate condition, are now shown to be themselves capable of dissociation; to be compounds, generally stable under their ordinary environment, but built up of units, the minuteness of which can be more readily exprest in words than apprehended by thought; these being common constituents of all bodies, however diverse. Such diversity depends indirectly on environment and directly on the mutual relation of the constituent corpuscles, that relation being a result of their movements. Thus the atom itself, instead of being a tiny speck of inert material, dependent on external stimulus, has been compared, by good authorities, to a miniature solar system, the electrified corpuscles rotating round each other and round larger corpuscles, oppositely electrified, and related one

to another, in their proportions, masses, and mutual distances, in ways not unlike those which obtain in existing planetary and stellar systems. But whether this or some other mode of presenting an idea which almost transcends the limit of science, be the more accurate, it is now generally admitted that matter may be ultimately reduced, not to anything that corresponds with our ordinary notion of that term, but to electricity in its two states, on some association of which its very existence may be dependent.

Science, then, has led us back step by step, and that by more than one path, to "the border-land where matter and force seem to merge into one another—the shadowy realm between the known and the unknown."[1] Thus the atom itself, instead of being inert, is a store of potential energy which, when not occupied in maintaining a condition recognizable by our senses as matter, is free to operate in other ways, as is shown by the phenomena of radio-activity. We also know that the form of a substance depends on its environment, according to which it may be gas, liquid, or solid, but even in the last state it is often permeable by the corpuscles, to use a very rough simile, like a fine wire sieve by air. It has also been discovered that the atmosphere is diaphanous to electricity as it

[1] Sir W. Crookes. "Modern Views on Matter" (1903).

is to light, but that the passage of the former is not arrested by such a material obstacle as the curvature of the earth; in short recent advances in physical science have shown that not only "the flower in the crannied wall," but the stones of the wall itself shroud mysteries of which no man can hope to raise the veil. Everywhere, from the merest speck of dust on this earth to the remotest gleams in the star-studded sky, that power, which we call energy, is manifesting itself in almost countless modes, and if we ask what that really is, we must, I think, be content to answer either that we do not know or that it is an epiphany of God.

Advances have also been made, tho with more uncertain steps, in ascertaining relations between the will and the organism, at any rate in man. I am well aware that this field of inquiry is full of pitfalls, that it is infested by the charlatan, but do not think it is therefore closed to scientific investigation, or is one which can produce no better harvest than Dead Sea fruits. Such investigation has already been carried far enough to show that the will is something more than a function of the organism, and can act independently upon it. The will also of one person, as we infer from well-established phenomena of hypnotism, is capable of exerting an influence over the will, and, through it, the body of another, and there is some evi-

dence to show action of this nature to be possible when the two persons are a considerable distance apart. But these phenomena—and I think this point important—are comparatively exceptional; they are not exhibited by all persons, but only when the instruments, to borrow a phrase from practical electricity, are properly attuned. At any rate, they intimate the existence of forces, but lately either unsuspected or discredited, which can, like gravitation or magnetism, act across space; forces which suggest that the antithesis between the natural and the miraculous may be less real than is commonly supposed.

If then the existence of a spiritual body was admitted by many philosophers, and generally believed by the populace, before Christ taught in Palestine, what additional burden did the doctrine of the resurrection, as preached by Paul, impose upon minds mistrustful of any but inductive reasoning? This doctrine asserts that in the future at a particular epoch, which is thus far analogous to our birth in this world, the relation between the conscious self—the soul of theologians—and some form or forms of material—a body—will become more comprehensive and complete. That can not be incredible on *á priori* grounds, for it is no more than an extension—a considerable one, I grant—of what has been generally admitted: the survival of something which, tho intangible, may be

visible. It can not be demonstrated by direct experiment, but if that is to be our only guide, we shall be compelled, I think, to pronounce any survival of the conscious individual to be impossible, or at least in the highest degree improbable, unless we admit it of every form of life. The doctrine also implies that the condition of the body in this new state must be far more dependent on the will of the personal self than is now possible. Here, tho in a state of constant flux, of incessant molecular, if not atomic, association and dissociation, it yet maintains, through consciousness of self, a personal identity, conferring, so to say, a temporary franchise on what once was alien. May not the individual will, under the conditions of another order, be capable of causing the constituents of its body to pass into a state analogous to the corpuscular in the present order, acting on them, across space, if necessary, to bring them again into union; thus making the invisible visible, and the immaterial material? Such a body might even be able to retain its constituent identity (if this be needed). Affinities now exist, which determine, in accordance with ascertained laws, the formation of certain molecules from certain atoms. But as these atoms are not innumerable, similar affinities must exist among the corpuscles; so that one association produces gold, another quicksilver, a third oxygen, and the identities of these

associations a not destroyed by the passage from solid, through fluid, to vapor, and the reverse. So it may be, that when matter is far more subject than now to will, this will may exercise a magnetic force on those constituents only, with which it had already entered into a personal relationship, and they may possess affinities which can bring them, and no others, into union. In such a case material identity, when a transitory is replaced by a permanent condition, would be completely maintained. This, I grant, is a speculation, and incapable of proof, but I maintain that it has been made more rather than less probable by recent advances in science. I will even venture to ask, whether, on the supposition that in our present phase of existence matter and energy may be ultimately identical, it would be surprizing if objective and subjective were similarly merged in that which is to come?

Jesus and the resurrection were Paul's message to the world and especially to the thoughtful men of his days, and it has not lost its force, familiar as it has since become, in our own. These are still the two great problems: Who shall deliver me from the body of this death; and What, if anything, is reached through the portals of the grave? Man had realized his want of something more definite than the power and love of God; the need of one who can be touched with the feel-

ing of our infirmities and is like unto ourselves, sin only excepted. That he found when the divine and the human met in one person and he could henceforth exclaim with the apostle "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The second question man had asked for countless years in vain: Science and philosophy had alike failed to solve the mystery. But it was answered on the first Easter morning. "Christ has risen"—on that fact the Church has been founded, in that belief countless thousands have fallen asleep in peace. For a time, science, in its rapidly increased perception of a reign of law seemed to produce difficulties; now it has made us familiar with phenomena which, a century ago, would have been deemed incredible, and it hints at possibilities which would make that reign far more inclusive than heretofore.

Tho theology and science may move in parallel planes man forms a conducting medium between them. They may labor on continents, between which, as it often seems to us, a wide sea flows, but we shall find that at last this narrows to a Dardanelles. Neither can dispense with the aid of the other; for if there are desires and cravings of human nature which science is powerless to satisfy, because they pertain to an order which can not be either seen by the eye or felt with the hand of living man, religion has its spiritual foes against which science is its best protector.

Paul himself had to do battle for Christian freedom against Jewish formalism and pagan superstition, and the contest is not yet ended. Truth, to reverse the well-known parable, is like wheat sown among tares; it has had from the outset to struggle against not only the reluctancy of the human heart, but also the perversions of the human mind. Here, then, is the field where science can strengthen the hands of religion, can help it in destroying parasitic growths which have often threatened to check its development, even to choke it out of existence. Their relations in the past have too often been those of mutual distrust, even of active hostility; let man no longer seek to put asunder what God hath joined together.

Paul came to Athens to satisfy the anxious questionings of mankind by revealing the God whom they had failed to find. It was a crisis in the world's history, little as his listeners on the Hill of Mars recognized its gravity. And it was not, neither will it be, the last in Christian history. The work of reformation is not yet complete. Many have striven to eradicate the relics of Judaism and the lingering taint of paganism, but more must be done before the Church catholic returns to the purer and stronger faith of its earlier days, without, however, repudiating the developments received from Christian philosophy. To that return superstition is hostile, but of superstition science is the im-

placable foe, for it refuses to be deterred by phrases or by fantoms of human creating. Years must pass before these finally lose all power of harm, and man becomes free as the servant of Christ. Such a deliverance may, in our darker hours, seem no better than a hopeless dream, yet might not Paul have despaired when he testified against idols at Athens? Let, then, those Christians who long for that dream to be realized, who are not afraid of a wider study of either this world or the mysteries of the universe, because in all these they see "the Vision of Him who reigns,"—let them now seek an alliance which they have too long repudiated, and call in their turn, as well they may, to fellow workers in science, "Come over and help us."

BOSWORTH

THE MEANING OF LIFE

EDWARD INCREASE BOSWORTH

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THE MEANING OF LIFE

EDWARD INCREASE BOSWORTH, D.O.

"If a son, then an heir."—Gal. 4 : 7.

THERE is one story that never fails to interest men. It is the story of the real experiences of a human life. If an old man should rise in any audience and describe with absolute frankness the most vitally important experiences of his life, he would hold the attention of his audience to the end. He would describe his earliest recollections of home, parents, brothers and sisters. He would tell of his first boy friend. He would describe the way in which he earned his first dollar. He would tell how he first met, learned to love and asked in marriage her who afterward became his wife. He would speak of the holy sensation of fatherhood that welled up in his heart as he held his first-born in his arms. He would speak of the dumb outcry of his heart as he held the same child in his arms and watched its breathing slowly cease. He would tell the story of the great loves and hates of his life. He would speak of the timid wonder or eager anticipation with which now, in his old age, he looks out upon a near eternity.

God is the supreme inventive genius of the

universe. Men are possest of wonderful inventive genius that has exprest itself in all the countless devices of modern civilization. We may say of them in homely phrase that in this particular they simply "take after" their Father, who is Himself the supreme inventive genius. So far as we know, the supreme product of His infinite inventive genius is the situation which we call plain, commonplace daily life. Nothing else is more wonderful than the daily relation of a man to his personal and physical environment, that we call plain daily life.

What is the meaning of this experience, the story of which never fails to interest men? What is the purpose of this situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God? What is life for? The answer is to be sought from the standpoint of the text—the Fatherhood of God: "If a son, then an heir." God appears as a Father of sons whom He wishes to be His heirs. Human life is a situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God, in which to train sons for an inheritance of power by teaching them to use power in a friendly spirit.

There are certain things implied in this statement of the purpose of life. It is implied that God is a Father who has vast power to bequeath. The evidences of it are on every side. It is said that if one of the fiery whirlstorms on the sun should occur

on the surface of the earth, it would be in the Gulf of Mexico thirty seconds after it had left the St. Lawrence, and everything in its track would be a hot vapor. The words that God left ringing in the ears of men, when He launched the race upon its career, were calculated to arouse expectation of power: "Subdue the earth," "Have dominion." The words which Jesus spoke to His fellow men at the close of His life of marvelous manifestation of power were also calculated to make them expect to exercise power. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do."

It is implied that God is an ambitious Father, ambitious to see His sons make the most of themselves. We sometimes think of God as a Sovereign whose plans are good for the world as a whole, but involve so much of hardship and limitation for the individual that a man may well wish to have the least possible personal connection with them. Such is not Paul's thought. To him God is indeed a Sovereign, but a sovereign Father, ambitious to see His sons become His heirs.

It is implied also that God is a conscientious Father, too conscientious to allow His sons to become His heirs unless they are fit to possess that which He would bequeath. Heirship was once synonymous with license. The heir to the throne was allowed certain ex-

emptions from ordinary obligations. He might gratify his appetites with a disregard of consequences unpardonable in the case of other men. But with advancing ideas of the responsibilities inseparable from the possession of power this idea is largely passing away. He who would inherit must be trained into fitness for the inheritance. It is said that one of the present European sovereigns gave little promise as a child of ever being fit for the inheritance that would naturally come to him. His father, however, was a conscientious man, and systematically set about the process of making his son fit for heirship. He provided for his physical development, gave him military training, educated him in the branches of learning most essential to statesmanship, and in every way so devoted himself to the preparation of his son for the responsibilities of heirship that, finally, when the prince inherited the kingdom, few rulers were better fitted than he for the responsibilities of power.

That human life is a situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God, in which to teach His sons to use power in a friendly spirit is evident from several considerations:

The nature of life as revealed in its two most characteristic features shows that it is intended to serve this purpose. It may seem difficult to determine what features of life ought to be selected as characteristic. We

naturally look for something very generally present in life and of fundamental significance. Perhaps, nothing more exactly meets this requirement than the phenomenon of human suffering, and the family.

Suffering is a universal and vitally significant feature of human life. Who escapes it? It begins with the physical pains of infancy. How many thousands lie to-day suffering in hospitals! How many millions suffer pain outside the merciful ministrations of the hospital! But who is there who lives long without knowing something of the suffering that is keener than bodily pain, the suffering of the soul, in all the violent passion or steady, relentless oppression of sorrow in its manifold forms? We may be unable to form a complete philosophy of suffering, but this much is at once evident: It makes a powerful appeal for the friendly use of power. Especially is this seen to be the case in our day when easy combination and swift transmission of power make it possible for a large number of men, each of whom has a little power, quickly to apply that power in a friendly way to any remote point of need. It is possible for thousands of persons, each with a small amount of personal power represented in his single dollar, to accumulate a sum of money within a few hours in the hands of a reliable central agency that will cable it to the other side of the world and release it there in some

form of personal activity that shall be the friendly relief of suffering.

By the side of the phenomenon of suffering stands the family as a great characteristic feature of human life. A large part of the significance of the family consists in the training it affords its members in the friendly use of power. A little child is born into the world, "an appetite and a cry." Very soon an appeal is made to the little soul for love. It is the appeal of the mother's eyes. The appeal of the father is soon made and felt to be different from that of the mother. In time a third appeal is made by the baby brother, and a fourth, different from the other three, by the baby sister. The child becomes a man and loves a woman. The appeal of the wife for love; that is, for the friendly use of power, differs from any that have preceded it. When a baby boy lies in the father's arms a new appeal is made, and the appeal of the baby girl touches a new chord in the father's heart. The seven-fold appeal of father, mother, brother, sister, wife, son, daughter, which is experienced in the fully developed family relationship, constitutes an appeal for the friendly use of power that can be matched by no creation of the imagination. When one looks, therefore, into the nature of human life as exprest in its two characteristic features, human suffering and the family, he is constrained to regard

it as a situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God in which to teach His children to use power in a friendly spirit, and presumably with reference to giving them larger bequests of power.

The truth of this proposition also becomes evident when we recognize that this conception underlay Jesus' theory of life. When the rich young senator came to Him as to an expert professional prophet, asking Him to specify something the doing of which would guarantee him the advantages of "eternal life," Jesus simply directed him to begin at once to use the power he already possest in a friendly spirit. He pointed out to him the suffering on every side and told him to begin to use his possessions in relieving it.

Jesus' general teaching regarding the proper use of money is based on this theory of life. "Make to yourselves friends," he said, "by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, so that when it shall fail they may receive you into eternal tabernacles" (Luke, 16 : 9). That is, a man's money power is to be used in a friendly spirit that will lay the foundations for eternal friendships. When two men meet for the first time in the age to come, it will be discovered that one is there because of the friendly spirit in which the other once used his money to meet the great needs of those whom he did not then know personally, and who perhaps lived in other

lands. Jesus regarded money as a comparatively low form of power put into a man's hands for a little time in order that he might learn to use it in a friendly way and so prepare himself to be trusted with higher forms of power. "If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" How can the Church expect God to trust it with any such large degree of prayer power as is described in the great promises of achievement through prayer, until it has first learned to use the lower money power in a friendly spirit? Jesus regarded money as something that really belongs to another. It often comes to us by inheritance from another, and is certain at death to pass from us to another. It remains in our hands a little while in order that by using it in a friendly way we may be prepared to inherit some higher form of power that we can carry out into the eternal future as our permanent possession. "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

Jesus not only held this view of life as a theory, but He actually used human life as a situation in which to prepare men for an inheritance of power by teaching them to use power in a friendly way. The salvation which He brings to men is one which saves them to this kind of life. There is no more striking

evidence of the seriousness of sin than the fact that the powerful appeal made by life itself is not sufficient to induce men to use power in a friendly way. There is still need that a great Savior should enter the situation and bring the persuasive power of His own friendly personality to bear upon men. But human life, as we have conceived it, is a situation big enough for, and suitable to, the operations of a great Savior. It affords Him the opportunity He needs to link men's lives in with His own ever-present life, and to train them through personal association with Himself in the friendly use of power. He not only pointed out the suffering poor to the rich young man who came inquiring about eternal life, and directed him to use his money in their relief, but He said also, "Come, follow me." He proposed to attach the man permanently to Himself and to the friendly enterprise into which He was leading His disciples. The disciples of Jesus were a company of men being personally trained by Him in the friendly use of power. They were to be specialists in friendship: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The Church of Jesus Christ is not a club which men and women join for what they can get out of it, but it is a company of men and women banded together to be trained by the living Lord in the friendly use of power. They keep the

search-light of their investigation playing all round the world's horizon, and when it falls upon some point of special need, to that point some members of this Christly company hasten with power for its relief.

It is further evident that human life is a situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God in which to prepare sons for an inheritance of power by teaching them to use power in a friendly spirit, because human life has actually been serving this purpose. When we look back over the long history of human life in the world, it is evident that God has fairly been crowding more power into the hands of men, as fast as they have learned to use what they already had with even an imperfect degree of friendliness. This is seen, for instance, in the case of explosives. Men in the brutal first century of our era could not be trusted to use the power of modern explosives. We see evidences enough of brutality still, but if some new explosive should be discovered that would destroy the lives of a million men in an instant, there is now a friendly sentiment in the hearts of men that would instantly demand the elimination of this explosive from modern warfare.

In the industrial development of our day, increasing power is being put into the hands of employers and employed, as men are able to use it with increasing, tho imperfect, friendliness. Once neither employers nor employed

could have been safely trusted with the power that organization has given to both parties, but now the growing sense of responsibility for the general welfare makes it safe to give larger power to both. It seems probable that vast industrial enterprises conducive to human welfare lie just ahead of us, which can be undertaken only when men have been trained to use power with a friendliness that will make it safe to trust them with the great increase of power that these enterprises will demand.

Human life, then, by its very nature, by Jesus' theory and use of it, by what it has already accomplished through the centuries, is seen to be a situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God, in which to train sons for an inheritance of power by teaching them to use power in a friendly spirit.

It is in the light of this conception of the meaning of life that the peril of living appears. The danger is that men will refuse to learn the friendly use of power, and therefore be unable to inherit the bequests of power that would naturally await them. Such failure means unspeakable loss. He who throws himself athwart the deep trend of the long evolution of life inevitably suffers indescribable disaster. It is of him that the most ominous words of Jesus are spoken. The power that he has will be taken from him and be given to him that has shown himself

fit to be trusted with large and growing grants of power—"Take away the talent from him and give it to him that hath ten talents." From the farmer who refuses to sow his seed the seed shall be taken and given to him who has it in abundance and is willing to sow it, for seed must be sown that God's children may have bread. "He will be cast out into the outer darkness," eliminated from Jesus' civilization of friendly workmen. Over against these busy friendly workmen, to whom, as they work together, God gives growing grants of power, the persistently selfish man putters away ever more feebly and painfully in his little lonely self-made hell. The peril is that men will not see the significance of plain daily life, with its commonplace and constantly recurring opportunity to learn to use power in a friendly spirit. The men that stood for judgment before the Son of Man cried out in surprized chagrin, "When saw we thee hungry and thirsty?" They had not noticed the significance of daily life. It is those with the least power, one-talent people, who are in greatest danger. They are too proud to do the little they can do because it will appear to others to be so little — "Others can do it so much better than I." Or the little power they possess is not sufficiently impressive to overcome the wicked lethargy of their anemic good will—"It is too much trouble." So they merit the de-

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scriptive words of Jesus, "wicked and slothful," proud and lazy, and pass out into the sphere of self-wrecked personalities.

But, on the other hand, this view of the meaning of life gives birth to a great hope. The man who has only a little power, and who faithfully uses it in the friendly spirit of a son of God, is certain to inherit vastly increased power. He lives in a generous economy in which he who is "faithful over a few things" will surely be "set over many things." It is this conception of the future life as one of achievement that appeals to the strong men of our age. We do not like to think of the future life as one of endless rest. We do not care to sing:

> There shall I bathe my weary soul
> In seas of endless rest,
> And not a wave of trouble roll
> Across my peaceful breast.

Tennyson rather has struck the chord to which our age responds, when he says of his departed friend:

> And doubtless unto thee is given
> A life that bears immortal fruit
> In those great offices that suit
> The full-grown energies of heaven.

The thought of "the full-grown energies of heaven" and the opportunity for their exercise that "heaven" must afford, makes im-

mortality seem worth while. The sons of God are to inherit a career. Men may walk the shores of the "silent sea" not shivering and cowering with fear of death, but feeling rather as Columbus did when he finally got his three ships, and sailed away expecting to find opportunity for great achievements beyond. They may walk the shore like spiritual vikings, ready to start out on a beneficent career of high adventure. They may feel an enthusiasm for eternity which will

Greet the unseen with a cheer!

But all this future outlook is for him who has present insight into the meaning of daily life and who puts himself under the daily discipline of Jesus. The homespun language of Sam Foss expresses his deep desire.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by—
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
I would not sit in a scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban;
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

Human life is a situation devised by the infinite ingenuity of God, in which to prepare sons for an inheritance of power by teaching them to use power in a friendly spirit. "If a son, then an heir."

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